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THE OLD MAN MET COMMODORE BURT FACE TO FACE, JUST IN FRONT OF THE BELLA UNION, AND SHOOK HIS
FIST IN THE LATTER'S FACE, AFTER WHICH HE HOBBLLED ON.

The Miner Sport;

OR,

SUGAR-COATED SAM'S CLAIM.

A DEADWOOD DICK EPISODE.

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS, "ROSE-
BUD ROB" NOVELS, "BONANZA BILL,"
"GILT-EDGED DICK," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I. GRIM GULCH.

I do not know that Grim Gulch ever had a name-giver, until the gold fever took to its confines a few adventurous spirits, who were willing to endure almost any amount of hardship, rather than not to set their grip upon the yellow particles, a pound of which meant quite a handsome sum in money.

The whole Western border was alive with excitement consequent upon the rich carbonate discoveries at Leadville, and the old eager spirit of the '49ers to acquire golden gain was strikingly exemplified in the restless, heterogeneous set who roamed from place to place, wide-awake and eager to dig when there was any show for getting profitable pay-dirt.

Some adventurous chap had expressed a desire one night at a Chin-Chin hotel, to explore Grim Gulch, with its deep gloomy furrow track through the heart of the mountain wilderness, and that wish had eventually turned a move in that direction.

Grim Gulch was prospected, and lo! gold and silver found.

That virtually settled the case.

The richest mineral-bearing section was christened a town after the lugubrious title of its gulch—Grim Gulch. It was a destined city of the feverish, crazy order, so many of which had been built and abandoned, except by a few struggling miners who were sometimes content to linger behind, and stand their chances of eking out a miserable and lonely existence.

Abandoned or "stampeded" towns are not always necessarily unworthy, but when a big drift gets into a miner's imagination or he is fired by fabulous stories in some other locality, you might as well try lassoing a moving locomotive as attempt to stop him.

And so, consequent upon the discovery of the gold, Grim Gulch's existence as a town became an assured fact, for "pilgrims" and "tender-foots," began to drop in by degrees, to populate and get rich.

Of the discoverers, and therefore the founders, there had been four: McDuff, a reticent and sour-tempered Irishman, Snapp, a Yankee, Hans, a Dutchman, and Sugar-Coated Sam, an American in the fullest sense of the word.

It was he who acted as a sort of captain, mayor, or president over the other three, until "folks" began to arrive. A sturdy, dashing fellow he was, of fine form and face, and with pride enough to keep him tidy and clean; hence the appellation—"Sugar-Coated;" for,

Snapp allowed he "war tew nice ter stan' ther wear an' tear of a rough life on ther frontier."

But, despite this pride, and maybe a little personal conceit that he was reasonably good-looking, Sugar-Coated Sam was capacitated for command, and was given the say in everything, and his advice was accepted by his three pards, without demur.

The site selected for the city was midway up the gulch, from its mouth, at a point where it widened out into a "pot" or "basin" of several acres extent.

Here Sugar-Coated Sam had caused lots to be staked off, all of uniform size and some fifty in number, and had arranged a squatters'-claim article and posted it upon an extemporized bulletin-board for the edification of any callers who should "drop in."

The document went on to dispense the gratuitous information that they, respectively, Sam'l, McDuff, Hans and Snapp, had settled upon the aforesaid property and taken out proprietary articles according to governmental rules and regulations, and therefore, it behooved would-be settlers in Grim Gulch to either lease or buy of them, as they were sole owners of all desirable lots in the heart of the city.

In penalty whereof it should be deemed an offense punishable with a 32-caliber revolver for any galoot to squat upon the aforesaid lots, without first having obtained the consent of the owners.

When everything was arranged, according to their liking, Sugar-Coated Sam set off to the nearest land agency to secure a good title, and in due time returned, first having noised about the news of the rich deposits of the auriferous that were to be found up in Grim Gulch.

For not only had the Miner Sport secured a title to the lots where the future city was to stand, but he had taken care to purchase neighboring tracts in the gulch, on either side of the prospective metropolis.

He thought he could foresee a day when these self-same lands, now rugged and unsightly, would turn dollars into the treasury of the firm—for as such they in due time signed articles of incorporation, as the Sugar-Coated Mining Co., with Sugar-Coated Sam as president, Snapp, vice-president; Sam'l, Snapp, Hans and McDuff as directors, and Sam as secretary, treasurer and accountant.

Timber was not handy to get at, and so they put up their miner's tent, and used it as a general habitation and office until they should be able to replace it with a brown-stone front, as Sam laughingly remarked to his partners.

A week of prospecting served to discover some valuable specimens of nuggets, quartz and "flakes," which Sam put upon exhibition on a table in the "shanty," as the tent was called, and waited for something or some one to turn up.

For, unless there was an influx of miners, the "city" promised not to progress rapidly toward Philadelphian proportions.

One day there came a person, but he was a "member" from China, and was not invited to stay.

In fact, he was rather prevailed upon by the morose McDuff to "be afther l'avin' at onc't,"

and be it said to his sagacity, the almond-eyed son of Confucius concluded there was no show for him in Grim Gulch, where there were only "four shirtee" to wash.

"If we can't have dacent p'aple we'll have none at all, at all," McDuff averred, and his mates were fully with him, so far as the Chinese question was concerned.

Finally a man came one day—a man who had evidently come to stay, as he was of that cheeky, bullying type of character, a cross between the gentleman and ruffian, whom it is hard to suppress, and this fellow was a good specimen of his class.

He rode into the city, upon a superannuated mule, that had an ear taken off in some sanguinary scrimmage, and looked as if there had been a famine in fodder, in his last place of residence.

The same might be said of the bullwhacker, who was gaunt and hungry-looking, and a sorry man for beauty, with his blood-shot eyes, tangled beard and hair and ragged attire.

Riding meekly into the camp, he drew rein in front of the single tent, before the door of which Sugar-Coated Sam was lounging in a hammock, the other pards being engaged in prospecting among the claims.

There was something like an enthusiastic expression in the bullwhacker's face as he heaved a deep sigh after drawing rein, and taking a good square look at the President of the Sugar-Coated Mining Company.

"Stranger," he said, finally, "I don't allow ye luk like a galoot w'ot's got religyun an' j'ined ther band o' saints that is to be!"

"Well, I presume you are right, as I don't exactly belong to any particular religious sect," Sam replied, curling his mustache, and regarding the stranger inquiringly.

"I know'd et—know'd et ther moment I sot eyes on ye. Thar's nothin' arterficial about you—nary a time. You're built on a gud solid basis, wo't won't admit o' yer stoopin' to nothin' mean. Ef ye want ter do er thing, ye do it. Ef ye want smoke et's yer biznes, an' no monopolizin' mite society hain't got no say why ye sha'n't do et, accordin' ter ther act o' Congress. Ef ye desire ter lubricate, ye kin 'smile' till yer face is one huge shinin' mark, 'thout any remarks bein' made. By the way, seein' thet I haven't tickled my thrut wi' a drap fer many a long day, I wouldn't mind j'inin' ye in a 'smile,' ef ye happen ter hev any ninety-in-the-shade or prime old Taos about yer shebang."

"Sorry, but as I don't often indulge, I haven't any liquor on hand," Sam replied, smiling at the roundabout way the visitor had in getting at his object.

"No liker! Alas! the words are alike unto the knell o' doom. Sure ye haven't got anything, pard—a leetle benzeen or speer'ts o' turpentine, fer instance, wi' a wassup nest in it, ter rasp off the phlegm in a feller's vocabulary trap?"

"Nothing stronger than the water in the brook yonder," Sam assured. "Might try a dose of it as an experiment, and put in a bull thistle or cactus stalk to give it tang!"

"Good thought! Stranger, you're an original. Great future scientific triumphs is in store

for you. And as for me, poetical inspiration is all I hev ter rely on fer my fame an' fortune in the present an' future."

"Then you are a poet, eh?" Samuel, the sugar-coated inquired, quizzically.

"Waal, now, thet I jest *am*, pard—a poet right frum ther pine-clad pinon-forest pinnacles o' ther Serious. Allow me three inches o' tanglefut in my b'iler, stranger, an' I, William Henry Shakespeare, kin spread out more rhythmic perfection ter ther squar' inch than ary other ravenous rhymmer in ther perfesh."

"Well, judging by your flippancy of tongue, I am not prepared to doubt that assertion," Sam said. "Cometh thou from afar, friend S.?"

"Frum Coffin Lid Camp, Colorady, latterly—formerly from Arizone. News did reach me that this was a place of destined golden promise, and therefore, being invited to a necktie party, and not keerin' to offend by refusin' ter attend, I silently packed my saddle-bags and stole this way with a view ter resumin' my old trade—publishin' a nusepaper. Paper, press and rig-out from A to Z hev I coming, an' I'll show ye a reverlation in journalism thet 'll make yer ears tingle, when they arrive on the fu'st train that I am the forerunner of."

"Summarily will I sit down upon ther sinfulness of ther people, an' advocate lynch law fer ther doctoring of road-agents an' hoss-thieves; in poloticks I shall be strictly neutral ter ther party w'ot sets-'em-up; a collum o' free advise consarnin' everybody's bizness wull be a prominent feature tergetaer wi' interspersions o' classic poetical prunes."

"Well, I presume you'll succeed, in case you don't suck in too much fluid bombasto infurioso," Sam replied. "At present we've not much enterprise in our town, but all ye've got ter do is invest a thousand in a lot, build yer shanty, an' go ter work."

"A thousand dollars! Great heavings, stranger, all I've got is but a V!"

"Then, unless you strike luck, there's a poor show for you here. Still, you can stay about camp, as long as you behave yourself."

For this privilege Shakespeare expressed thanks in strong terms, and dismounting unloaded his saddle-bags and turned his equine companion out to graze, as there was a plenty of tender grass and bushes about the valley.

With the coming of the rough-looking pilgrim it would seem that good luck came to Grim Gulch, though he was a tough customer to be an omen of luck; for the very next day his promised wagon-train of "stampeder" wound its way into the gulch, and still another, a day later.

Of the first all were rugged miners, clad in the inevitable red or blue shirt, and corduroy breeches, top-boots and slouch hat of the mining country, and equipped with mining paraphernalia, and armed well, for these "stampeder" of experience are not the ones to venture into an unknown country without a plenty of powder and lead.

Of the second party there was a more heterogeneous assortment of humanity, consisting of several ladies—wives and daughters of the men—and some men of the class that aim to earn a livelihood by other means than actual hard

labor—Bohemians who lived by their wits, speculators, gamblers and sporting men generally.

But of all the lot was one whose appearance would naturally attract the most attention—a girl of some sixteen or seventeen years, rigged out in a stylish fitting gray plaid suit consisting of coat, pants and vest, with a shiny plug hat set jauntily upon a head-crowning of tight little yellow curls, while patent-leather slippers graced a dainty pair of feet.

Then there was a glossy white shirt front, with collar, tie and genuine diamond cluster pin, white kids upon the hands, a heavy gold chain strung across the vest, with a miniature gold revolver for a charm, and a slender gold-headed cane that she could twirl quite dextrously.

And added to the flashy attractiveness of her dress was the fact that she was in both face and form a decidedly bewitching beauty.

CHAPTER II.

TWO GIRLS AND AN OLD RIP.

OF course the inpouring of the new-comers brought bustle and confusion.

A number immediately purchased claims, and proceeded to stick up tents upon them, and make things livable, while others were of the grumbling class and were not disposed to pay the price asked.

Sugar-Coated Sam treated all with politeness, but did not urge any one to purchase, telling them that there was a plenty more land a mile or so up the gulch that could be had for the squatting on it.

But, right in town did these pilgrims desire to locate, and many were their arguments for better terms, all of which the young President of the Sugar-Coated Mining Company received with quiet, calm refusal.

"Sorry, my friends, but business is business, and 'cash' is what talks and just the unalterable amount I have asked for."

And so it stood until the girl dandy made her plea.

"You're a mean robber and I don't half like you," she said, when Sam coolly refused her as he had done the rest. "You might just give me a place to make a strike for luck, with out asking for money."

"Sorry, ma'am," Sam responded; "but you know the early bird catches the worm, and I and my pards flew down here first, and if you want a piece of our pie you must reasonably expect to pay for it."

"Sure-Pop," as she had announced herself, did not appear to relish this decision, and went off in a huff, but soon returned for another interview.

"See here," she said. "I haven't got no money, an' yet I want a piece of this bonanza. Therefore, I'll gamble with ye fer it—either by dice, keards or pistols. If you lose, you're ter give me a pick of the lots; if I lose, you are to take my hand in marriage."

"Humph. I don't happen to be of a marrying disposition, and so cannot see any profit to me in your one-sided proposition. Here is William Henry Shakespeare, however, a man of great poetical promise, who would no doubt arrange with you."

"No, sir-ee, not I! I don't keer to take no 'sponserbilities o' ther kind on my slender shoulders," William Henry protested.

And so the girl sport did not meet with success, and the other emigrants were in a measure likewise served.

A sort of meeting was held among them, and then they harnessed up, packed up, and moved on up the gulch, to a place, it was supposed, where land was more free.

"Sure-Pop" went with them, and the last thing before leaving, she turned and shook her finger at Sugar-Coated Sam, as much as to say:

"Look out for me."

Just at that time Sam did not attach much significance to the act.

The following day brought another influx of visitors, and of these a great many invested in claims, glad of the opportunity to have a hand in what promised to be a future great gold excitement.

The price asked was not considered exorbitant by those who had had experience; it was only those who were of a quarrelsome disposition that found fault, and of these the great majority had already moved off to other parts.

But was there not significance in their going? It was left for the future to reveal that.

Passing over a period of two weeks, let us once more look down on Grim Gulch.

All is now changed. Everywhere are bustle and commotion. The gulch bottom is crowded with people of all sorts, and excitement consequent upon active and successful business is evident among the people.

Although no more claims had been sold, outright, nearly every lot was occupied, for Sam had let them out on shares, and they were netting him and his partners more profit than though he had sold them.

A little city of cabins, shanties and tents had sprung up about the basin, and a sort of main street laid out, running parallel with the gulch, on either side of which a few business places had sprung into existence.

Sugar-Coated Sam ran his office in conjunction with a brokerage business; Hans had started the only saloon in the place, together with a dance-house and gaming-room, all in one large tent, known as the Bella Union; Snapp, the Yankee, had taken to working one or two claims that had not been let, and McDuff had built a big shanty and started a boarding-house.

And as there was a constant tide of emigration pouring in, the Hibernian found his establishment often inadequate to accommodate all applications for b'ar meat and beds.

One evening, while Sugar-Coated Sam was sitting in his tent, behind a rude counter, engaged in weighing out gold-dust, while in another corner the bullwhacker poet was setting up the form of the Grim Gulch *Daily Gazetteer*, which was now an actual existing news organ, a young lady entered.

She was rather a prepossessing appearing young woman of eighteen or nineteen years, with a fair face, blue eyes and brown hair, and was modestly and neatly attired in inexpensive garments.

She seemed slightly embarrassed on entering,

but finally approached the counter, hesitatingly. "Are you the editor, sir, of the local paper?" she asked, timidly.

"No, ma'am, I am not," Sam replied. "Mr. Shakespeare yonder, is the prime factor of our local publication.

"Yes, hyar am I," announced Shakespeare, rising, and doffing his hat politely. "I'm ther editor, ther perprietor, an' instigator, mum, you bet. Ef thar's anything in my line ye want did, an' want it did fu'st class, I'm yer huckleberry. Ef ye want er funeral notice or an epitaff, shute me fer a grizzly ef I ain't thar. Epitaffs ar' in my line. Fer instance, how ar' this:

"He was a biped, blithe and gay,
An' tuk his bitters ev'ry day,
But cruel fate et called—he pass-ed
An' now is numbered wi' the blasted."

"Now, how w'u'd that fit, mum?"

"I am not in need of epitaphs, sir," the young lady replied, in evident surprise at the bull-whacker's volubility. "I wished to have an advertisement put in your paper, that a young lady without other means of support would like washing and sewing to do, at low prices."

"Ah, yes! But, 'scuse me, mum, aire ye ther party?"

"I am, sir."

"An' ye don't mean ter say ye ken't git along 'thout gittin' yer hands inter soap-suds?"

"I have no other honest and respectable way of getting a livelihood, sir, and am not afraid to work."

"Mebbe not, but I allow you're too precious a flower ter waste yer muscle on desert air. Et won't do, mum—et won't do. Et would be a sin fer sech a purty gal ter scrub, an' hyar am I a free-fisted citizen w'at'll use my influence ter start ye in some better bizness. Now, how'd tendin' bar strike ye, or wrastlin' wi' pots an' kittles, over at McDuff's?"

"Not at all!" was the prompt reply. "I have my business, and propose to follow it. What will the notice cost?"

"Nary a cent, mum. No charge do I make fer representin' ther bizness o' widders an' or-funts. Jest give me yer name, an' ye can call me a rantankerous rat-trap rhymers ef I don't fix ye up ther purtiest ad. ye ever see'd."

"My name is Bessie Burt, sir, and you must accept pay. I do not wish to depend on any one for anything."

"Waal, then, enough ter buy an eye-opener, ef anything, will be enuff. Now, how does this strike ye as appropriate ter ther occasion:

'Miss Bessie Burt
Wull wash yer shirt,
Her washin' is sublime;
She'll darn yer socks,
Her ironin' knocks
Ther spots all off o' time,
No Chineese dodge
About her lodge,
From toe-nail to ther koller,
She'll clean yer duds
In honest suds,
An' tax ye but a dollar.'

"Thar! ain't thet poetry, tho'?"

Miss Burt smiled.

"You are quite a success at extemporizing,

indeed," she replied; "but I prefer a plain little card, like this, for instance—'Miss Burt, a respectable young lady, would like washing and ironing to do, or sewing, at her residence.' Here is a dollar, to pay for the insertion."

She laid it upon the editorial table, and then turned and left the tent.

"A deuced pretty girl," Sugar-Coated Sam muttered. "I wonder where she came from?"

So interested was he in the case that he scared up a few white shirts and handkerchiefs, and took them over to a neat tent at one side of the gulch, where he learned that Miss Burt had rented privilege ground upon a claim where search had failed to discover gold.

She was sitting upon a stool, just outside of the tent, but arose with a bow, as he approached.

"I thought I would prove myself an early customer," Sam said, handing her his parcel, "by bringing you a few articles."

"Thank you. You are generous," she said, "and I will try to return the favor in good work. When will you have them?"

"Oh! most any time convenient to you. Are you a stranger in this part of the country?"

"Yes, sir. I came here from—well, from the East," she added, after a moment's pause.

Evidently she did not care to tell just where she came from, or much concerning herself, and Sam therefore concluded it would be impertinent for him to be too inquisitive. So he simply said:

"Ah, well, I hope you will like your new home," and then he departed.

It was his custom to spend his evenings at home, in the tent, as he always had considerable gold in stock, and there were plenty of men in Grim Gulch who would not hesitate to go for it.

But to-night he neglected his duty and dropped in at the Bella Union to speak to Hans.

It was while there that he was approached by an old codger, who, from his ragged attire and long snow-white hair and beard, looked as if he might be Rip Van Winkle.

"Excuse me, sir," the old pilgrim said, in a weak, tremulous tone, "but I am told that you are a brave, good man—would you grant a poor stranger, in trouble, a private interview?"

"Well, I don't know but I might," Sam replied, looking the man over. "Something important?"

"Ay, young man, I have much to say that is of importance, if you will only be so kind as to listen."

"Well, come along to my tent. I reckon it can't do any harm to listen to you," the young man said, and led the way from the saloon.

It was quite a walk to his tent, and as they strode along Sam watched his man narrowly.

"You are a pretty old pilgrim to be wandering about in this rough country, are you not?" he queried.

"Yes, very old, and fast nearing the end," was the reply, followed by a deep sigh.

That the sigh was not genuine it did not occur to the handsome President of the Sugar-Coated Mining Company just then, for he looked upon the aged delegate as some harmless old chap, who, in a fit of mental aberration, had

strayed from his home, or mayhap a hermit who had just wandered forth from his long seclusion.

In due time they arrived at Sam's tent and entered, and bidding the stranger wait a moment, Sam went forth in search of a lantern, which he had during the day left in another place.

On finding it he returned and entered his tent and fumbled about for a match.

Soon he had the lantern lit, and was about to turn its light upon his aged guest, when he was conscious of receiving a terrible blow beside the head, and then knew no more.

When he regained his consciousness the tent was in darkness, and the man was bending over him applying restoratives, whom he recognized as the bullwhacker poet and editor, William Henry Shakespeare.

"Great catapults an' comets," uttered Shakespeare, when he saw that Sugar-Coat was recovering—"show me ther man w'ot sold ye ther p'izen that made ye so drunk, an' I'm a sinner ef I don't make it a hundred an' fifty above zero for him."

"The old cuss—where is he?" Sam gasped. "Strike a light, quick! Some one hit me on the head."

The light was soon produced, but not to reveal the aged stranger; he had gone.

What was the mystery of the attack on the president of the mining company?

Surely not robbery, for investigation proved that nothing had been disturbed.

CHAPTER III.

"OH! MY HUSBAND! MY HUSBAND!"

To Sugar-Coated Sam it was a mystery, for he could not imagine who the assailant could have been unless it was the old man, and if it were indeed he, what was his object?

The puzzle became greater, when examination proved that everything about the tent was intact, not a thing having been disturbed.

The blow had been given with some square-edged instrument, which had inflicted a wound, but only a slight one, which promised nothing serious, and Sam soon felt able to walk about.

"I'm shot if I know what to think of the matter," he muttered. "The old chap was a humbug, and had an object—that's flat. He no doubt intended to whack my brains out, and thought he had, when he saw or heard me fall to the ground, and so fled. He should have assured himself of the thickness of my skull before venturing rashly."

"Yas, them's words of great poetry without rhythm," Shakespeare declared. For instance:

"Hyar is Sugar Coated Sam,
Every inch o' him a man,
Whose pate is really harder'n a brick;
Thar's naught wull lay him flat,
Unless a heavy spat
Admin'ster'd by an ugly jack-mule kick."

"Thar, I reckon that's true, too. And yet, friend an' pilgrim, it will behoove thyself to look on either side fer snags."

"I shall certainly be more on guard," Sam replied.

The next day Shakespeare devoted most of his paper to the news of the attempted assassi-

nation of Sugar-Coated Sam, and wound up by offering a hundred dollars reward for the capture of the old reprobate, and added the following versification:

"A man of note
Is Sugar-Coat—
A man of muscle, Sam;
Got hit on ther head
But never bled—
Is lively as a clam."

And such was the case, for Sam soon felt all right again.

That day, while the town was in its usual bustle of excitement, a stage arrived and unloaded, among other passengers, a tall, stern man, with iron-gray hair and beard, accompanied by a woman and child—a woman of perhaps twenty years of age, and not strikingly handsome.

They at once went to McDuff's boarding-house and registered, after which the lady was shown to a room, and the man who had inscribed himself as Commodore Burt upon the register of McDuff's Grand Central, strolled out about the town.

In the course of his rambles he came abruptly to a halt in front of Miss Bessie Burt's tent, where that young lady was sitting, engaged in some sewing, while she archly conversed with Sugar-Coated Sam, who had strolled over "to get his washing," which was a good excuse, although he privately presumed that she would not be likely to have the work done for several days.

The commodore was seen by the young laundress almost the same instant he saw her, and it was evident there was a recognition, for Miss Bessie uttered a startled exclamation, and shrunk away.

"Ah! what is the matter? Do you know this man, or is he some enemy?" Sam said, stepping closer to her, as if willing to act as her protector.

"I am no loafer, sir, and presumedly I know this girl," the commodore replied, haughtily. "If you will kindly take yourself off, I will converse with Miss Bessie."

"No, no! don't leave me in that monster's company!" Bessie cried, clinging to Sam's arm. "He is a bad, wicked man, and I fear, loathe, and despise him."

"Then I'll look well to it that he don't harm you when I am nigh," Sam said, calmly. "I'd suggest that *you* are the proper person to take yourself off, sir."

"When it pleases me I may see fit to do so, but not before," the commodore retorted. "You will not scare me, my noble border ruffian."

"We'll see about that, if I hear any report of your offering this young lady molestation," the President of the S. C. M. Co. replied. "I've been known to horsewhip a man for a less offense. Mark my word now! So beware what you do or say."

And then Sam turned and strode away.

Commodore Burt watched him like a hawk until he had disappeared, then turned to Bessie, who was standing a few paces away, her figure drawn up to its fullest hight, in an attitude of indignation.

"Well," he said, with a smirk, "it seems the fates have willed it that we should meet again, my dear, although I little expected to find you back in the West again. It must be my bloodhounds have been sharp of scent."

"Your Mormon dogs are of no account. It has been an easy matter for me to elude them," Bessie replied, with a calmness born of terror.

"But it will not be so easy a matter for you to elude me, however," he sneered.

"Bah! I fear you not, even though you are base enough for any act. I am not in Utah now."

"Bah! you are as much in my power as though you were at Salt Lake!" was the reply. "The inevitable meshes of fate have woven around you, and you may as well yield. You are mine, and I will have you—or your life. Escape you cannot—experience has taught you that. You have squandered all your ready cash in scudding from one part of the continent to another, but my sleuths have never for a minute been off your track. As a last extreme, I find you in this rough place, engaged in a doubtful and poverty-stricken attempt to get your living."

"Stop! don't dare to cast any base insinuations, you cowardly wretch!" Bessie cried. "Though I may have spent all the money my father left me, and though you hold all of his estate under control until I am of age, I am not even yet reduced to disgrace—least of all, the disgrace of becoming your third wife, you monster!"

"But listen to reason. You are a Mormon, bred and born. Your father was a Mormon before you, although he had but one wife. On his death-bed he gave you to me, and his property under my control, until you were of age, with the understanding that you were to marry me. If you refuse, according to the rules of the Mormon Church, your fate will be a terrible death. Become my wife, and before you is a bright and happy future."

"Never, George Burt—never! I would suffer a hundred deaths rather than become the victim of your polygamous designs. Go back to your two foolish wives, and rejoice in the knowledge that your last would-be victim was not for you!"

"Curse you, no! I'll have you yet, as soon as I perfect my plans. Your nice little thousand acres in Utah shall be mine by right of being lord and master."

Then, shaking his hand at her threateningly, he turned and left her, striding back toward the hotel.

"God help me!" Bessie moaned, when he was gone. "I thought I had eluded him for good."

After leaving Bessie, Sugar-Coated Sam returned to his tent, and opened the safe with which he was now provided, to make an inventory of the stock of dust and cash he had on deposit for the miners.

What was his horror, on opening the strong repository, to find that some one had recently been there ahead of him, and removed everything of money value.

Who was it? Who was there in the camp ex-

pert enough to open the safe without understanding the combination of the lock?

That was what puzzled him, as he knelt upon the ground and stared at the empty drawers.

He knew something was to pay—he realized that it would be a hard rap against him, for, aside from his own and the firm's money, he held in trust several thousand dollars for other miners who had no safe place for keeping their earnings.

How would they take the loss?

Not very pleasantly, he feared, and yet he knew it was his duty to apprise them, no matter what the consequences might be.

But he preferred to do it his own way, and accordingly so set to work.

Procuring some large sheets of blank paper, he printed with ink and brush thereon, the following notice, in plain lettering:

"\$500 REWARD!

"ROBBERY! ROBBERY! ROBBERY!

"The above sum will be paid for the arrest and conviction of the party or parties who, within the past hour, have opened and extracted from the safe of Sugar-Coated Sam, all the money and gold stored therein, during the absence of the undersigned from his tent.

SUGAR-COATED SAM."

After printing several of these notices, he sallied forth, and posted them up where they would attract the attention of the losers by the robbery.

As a result, there was an immediate excitement, and people began to crowd around and ply Sam with questions, particularly those who had had money or gold deposited in the safe.

To one and all he gave the same invariable answer, that all he knew about the affair was that on opening the safe he had found the money gone.

Some few were inclined to believe this, but there is always a contrary spirit in every party, and in this case there were a number whose dark and significant looks expressed a different view of the matter, had not their words confessed it.

"I dunno how any feller could git inter ther treasury without your knowledge," one miner remarked, "as ye sed thar was a combination lock ter yer safe."

"I don't suck et in, nuther," another said. "You probably stole ther pile yerself, an' made off with it, an' then cum back a-tryin' ter stuff us up that some unknown person robbed the safe. Et won't pass muster, Sugar-Coat!"

Sam flushed with indignation.

"You are unjust, sir," he replied, "and did I not believe that you do not really mean it, I would be tempted to shoot you. I swear by all I hold sacred that I know nothing of what has become of the contents of the safe, further than what I have told you, and that is all in my power to do at present. If you see fit to doubt my word, I cannot prevent, nor shall I fly from you or any man's wrath."

Then, turning, Sam strode away toward his tent.

No attempt was made to prevent his going, but many dark glances were sent after him, and those who were suspicious of him huddled about in groups, and conversed among themselves.

There was evidently no purpose of harming him until something more definite could be proven against him.

His own partners, Snapp, Hans and McDuff were among those who seemed to doubt him, although they freely admitted that they had never before had any reason to doubt his honesty and integrity.

"It would not be policy to arrest him until more than simple suspicion points to his guilt," one of the more practical ones said. "It will, however, be well enough to keep a secret watch on his movements, to insure that he does not escape."

Accordingly, several miners were detailed to linger about the approaches to the town, while a couple of others were appointed to secretly dog Sam's footsteps.

But there was no need of this, as he made no motion toward leaving Grim Gulch.

Just at dusk he sauntered around to Bessie's place, and received his washing and took it back to his tent.

"I have heard of your trouble and the suspicion, and I don't believe you are guilty," she said, frankly. "I hope they will not harm you."

"Thank you. I don't anticipate any serious trouble," he replied. "Perhaps it was but natural they should disbelieve me, but they will sooner or later find out their mistake."

After returning to his tent, and leaving his package there, he went over to the Bella Union, and entered with the same nonchalance he would have exercised had no suspicion been cast upon him.

Sauntering about among the tables, he was about to select a seat, when a woman sprung forward and threw her arms impulsively around his neck.

"Oh! my husband! my husband!" she cried; "at last we meet, after so many years' separation!"

And this woman was the same one who had accompanied Commodore Burt to Grim Gulch.

CHAPTER IV.

A VOTE FOR MAYOR—THREE SHOTS.

If ever a man was surprised, it was Sugar-Coated Sam. He instantly realized that he was the victim of a blackmailing scheme, but how was he to get out of the scrape creditably to himself?

He knew it devolved upon him to act immediately and decidedly.

"Excuse me, ma'am," he said, putting her forcibly off, at arm's length, "but I allow you've got hold of the wrong man."

"No! no! I have not; you are my husband, my long-lost husband," she asserted, making another lunge to get her arms about his neck. "You needn't try to deceive me, for I knew you the moment I set eyes upon you. You are my Sammy—Samuel Singleton—and I am willing to swear to it."

If Singleton was Sam's name, it was a bit of news to the Grim-Gulchites, for they had never known what his latter cognomen was.

"It is false; it is an attempt to blackmail me," Sam cried, sternly, putting her away from

him. "I swear I never saw you before, and never want to again."

"Oh! no doubt about that," said a mocking voice, and the Mormon, Commodore Burt, elbowed forward through the crowd that had collected.

"After consigning your sane wife to a mad-house to get rid of her, one could hardly expect you would be extra anxious to see her. Nevertheless, I interested myself enough in the case to secure her liberation and bring her here, where she will have an opportunity to enjoy the benefit of your surplus gold-bags."

"Great Heaven! this is the most infamous of lies. You are a Mormon scoundrel come here in pursuit of a defenseless girl, and this foolish woman is one of your wives—and because I defended in a measure your would-be victim, you have sprung this revenge upon me by causing your own polygamous tool to stand up and give utterance to a base lie."

"Gentlemen, I appeal to you; I swear to you that this is not true!" the woman cried piteously. "It is just as Mr. Burt has said. This man, Samuel Singleton, married me a number of years ago, and then consigned me to a mad-house to get rid of me. Through the kindness of Mr. Burt I have at last succeeded in escaping and in reaching this point, and I want you to make him live with me as husband should—or, at least give me sufficient money to support me in comfortable circumstances through life."

The appeal was not made in vain, for it elicited a sympathetic grunt from a number of miners, especially those who had suspected Sam of the safe-robbery.

"Et stands ter reason, b'yees, thet we shed give the petticoater ther preference in belief!" one miner declared. "Sugar-Coat luks like ther kind o' a chap w'ot would desart his wife."

"Yas, an' I o'ine ther more ye investigate him, ther more one is apt ter discover, too," another knight of the pan and shovel declared significantly.

"On course," chimed in still another. "Sugar-Coat knows w'ot he's about, every day, an' was ther galoot w'ot robbed the safe an' then tried ter play up 'possum on us."

"An' hyar's w'ot suggests thet we, a thrivin' young city, should hev a government ter settle wi' sech cases, and I purpose we hyar, on this spot, elect a combined jedge an' mayor an' sheriff, who shall hev ther power ter transact all legal bizness, an' settle ther hash o' evil-doers at large."

"Gud idea—gud idea. Hyar am I, Bill Henery Shakespeare, ther primest factor in ther hull multiplicand, who would accept ther persish wi' blushin' pleasure, an' be glad o' ther chance ter adjust all deefikulties of a personal or public natur'."

"Fer makin' a noose
They say I am handy.
Tho' law is my princerpal holt;
Jest fill me wi' juice
An' I am ther dandy
Poetercal petterfogical colt."

"Or I can be prevailed upon to accept such a position," Commodore Burt modestly volunteered. "Although a stranger to you, I presume I can give you satisfaction, having filled

several positions in public, such as governor, mayor, and secretary of state."

"Ary article o' my personal raiment, from my holey socks ter ther thr'ut-piece o' my shirt, will I bet that ye nevyer filled a position higher than boss over a hoss-steal in yer life!" the bullwhacker poet declared, grimly. "An' no other canderdate w'u'd I rather buck ag'in' than you. For

"I kin see it in yer eye,
That yer head is full o' rye—
In legal matters soon ye'd make a blunder—
Fer ef ye tried ter quash,
Soon 'tw'u'd settle yer fair hash,
An' ther boys'd blow yer carcass up ter thunder."

"Your poetical self-sufficiency ought to be suppressed, or it will prove generally detrimental to the community!" Burt fired back. "By the way, gentlemen, I fully indorse the idea that you need a mayor, for you are a young city of much importance, and rapidly drawing nigh unto the zenith of your aspirations. Therefore, it becomes you to have dignity in the possession of a good public representative—moreover, it is necessary, as this country is fast filling up with lawless characters, and soon we will have road-agents and roughs of every description to contend with. Therefore, I suggest it as an excellent idea that we make the move before the roads get bad—to use a figurative expression. Arrest this man Singleton, who at best is an unsavory rascal, and keep him under lock and key until we can give him a trial. On the morrow, call an election, and nominate and elect by vote a good man to boss the town and keep matters in a good healthy state. What say?"

A cheer greeted the Mormon's speech. His views were practical, if they were selfish, and hit the nail upon the head, so far as the citizens were concerned.

A number made a move to secure Sugar-Coated Sam, but got knocked very uncereimoniously down, as a result of their indiscretion.

In no ways inclined to be taken was the sportive President of the Sugar-Coated Mining Company, and after laying out four of his assailants, he whipped out a pair of 32-caliber revolvers, and with them at full cock, in his grasp, stood awaiting the issue.

"Come on, if you like!" he said with a dangerous quietness of demeanor. "I'm ready for the second and third edition, you perceive. If you want to have sufficient material to poll an electoral vote to-morrow, about the surest thing you can do is to let Sugar-Coated Sam alone—take my word for it!"

But these men of Grim Gulch evidently did not think in this same way, for an overwhelming number leaped forward, regardless of his threat, and secured him in less time than it takes to tell it.

Three fell, mortally wounded, however, ere the capture was accomplished, and it was the sport's revolvers that did the business.

One thing Sugar-Coated Sam noted particularly—Shakespeare took no part in the attack or the suspicion against him—a fact he wondered at somewhat, for once upon a time before these two men had been foes, although it was

evident the bullwhacker had not as yet come into knowledge of the truth.

Of all the rough assemblage none seemed more highly gratified at Sam's capture than Commodore Burt.

"Ha! ha!" he hissed. "I fancy you will not take the *role* of a defender hereafter, will you? Your game will end here in Grim Gulch."

Sam did not reply, but suffered himself to be led away to a cabin belonging to a miner named Carter, which had recently been finished, and offered as strong attractions as a prison, as any other in the young city.

Into this Sam was locked, and left to his own reflections, whatever they might be.

An immediate canvass was inaugurated, and Grim Gulch was politically alive.

Three tickets or candidates were offered as being the best for the people to vote for, for mayor, judge and sheriff, and each ticket had its advocates.

First proposed for the new office was Commodore Burt, and he promised to become popular among one class—not because there was anything attractive about the man himself, but because he seemed to have an abundance of ready greenbacks in his pocket, which he quietly slipped into the hands of such men as he thought would be likely to support him and influence others to do so.

The next candidate proposed was Poetical Shakespeare, and he seemed likely to carry the votes of the roughest class, from the fact that they stood in awe of him, because he had already demonstrated that he was the bully of the burg, so far as fisticuffs and excessive bragging were concerned.

The choice between him and Burt, promised to be about equal.

And in face of the suspicions and circumstances which had arisen against Sugar-Coated Sam, there had been one party bold enough to propose his name for the mayoralty.

Who this person was, was not definitely known, if indeed, known at all.

He was a bushy-whiskered and hairy individual, of medium size, little of whose countenance aside from the peering eyes could be seen; owing to his hair, beard, and slouch hat. His garments were coarse and dirt-stained, and his belt bristled with weapons, and upon his hands he constantly wore a pair of mittens.

Where he had come from no one took pains to inquire—he was simply one of the strange and varying types of humanity that the daily stage brought into the town, and had risen up on top of a table in the Bella Union Saloon, and declared to the crowd that it was his opinion that Sugar-Coated Sam was the right man for the office to be filled, and that he had a few surplus "rocks" to back his opinion.

Later he gave his name as Bumblebee Bob, and "set 'em up" for a large number of the bystanders, paying for the treat with a large and valuable nugget.

Although his first proposition in favor of Sugar-Coated Sam was greeted with a general laugh, it was not without its effect, and when the following day dawned, it began to grow apparent that there were to be three lively con-

tests for a choice of the "boss of the town," among which Sugar-Coated Sam was not to be so far behind. And as the election day progressed, the excitement waxed hot and furious, and bets were made by the hundred, on the result.

Although Sugar-Coated Sam was kept confined in the cabin and a vigilant guard kept over him, his race progressed probably as favorably as if he had been at large, for Bumblebee Bob, as he called himself, was wide-awake to the prisoner candidate's interests, in the fullest sense of the word, and much to the envy of the other candidates and their friends.

He used his money quietly and judiciously, where the others used theirs rashly and with publicity; he was here, there, and everywhere, and approached one and all with an irrepressibility characteristic of a professional "slumper."

Another thing might have been noticeable to a close observer. There were a great many strangers in the place, who had never been seen there and, what was most singular, two thirds of their aggregate number wore heavy full beards of a decidedly sandy color, while the other third wore jetty black beards.

A detective would have pronounced them two different bands of disguised men, whose business was not above suspicion, but in the hubbub and excitement of the election-day, few if any took any notice of the matter.

And, too, the eccentric female fop in male attire, whom we have once before seen as Sure-Pop, came into the camp, accompanied by the male part of the people who had previously left it with her, and all hands polled votes—but for whom was hard to tell.

Commodore Burt and Shakespeare, said the ticket-taker, were running about even as near as he could estimate, but when asked how Sugar-Coated Sam was running, he would shake his head with a peculiar smile, and decline to answer.

What did the smile signify? That Sam was to receive an overwhelming majority? Or did it mean he was going to get left majestically behind?

Burt rushed from the polls to McDuff's boarding-place, and to the room of the woman who had said she was Sugar-Coated Sam's wife. She and the little girl were sitting by a window gazing out upon the bustling scene on the street.

"Furies take the man," he said. "He will beat us at our own game, if a desperate measure is not adopted. Fire three shots upon the street; get quietly out of the town, and follow the directions I gave you this morning."

When he had gone, the woman got a pistol, fired three times into the street, through an open window, and then stole from the house by the rear way.

What did it all mean?

CHAPTER V.

A MOONLIGHT TRIAL.

WHATEVER it meant, few could tell—few that knew—few that took pains to know.

Most every one's thoughts were upon the issue

of the vote, and if a dozen had been assassinated by those two bullets, it is doubtful if any particular notice would have been taken of the fact.

And when a number of black-whiskered men left the crowd, and scattered in various directions, but one person upon the street took notice of it, and that person Commodore Burt, into whose face there flashed a light of combined evil and satisfaction.

The bullwhacker noticed this, and broke forth:

"'Yes, hyar's w'ot's a jedge o' pie,
An' thar's green in yer eye,'

or ye can call me a surcker. I say, brother candidate, w'ot expression twinkles in yer eye?"

Burt started.

"Go to thunder," he growled, on seeing who it was. "If you see anything expressed in my eye, it is because I am going to win the race."

"Now, ef ye want ter bet on that, I'm yer man, from toe-nails ter eye-teeth, pardner, in ary sum, fur bu'st my boots ef I don't allow Sugar-Coated Sam is goin' ter take ther pot. An' I reckon et ain't goin' ter disappoint me ef I do get left, 'ca'se my resposnerbilities in the newspaper line won't allow me ter 'tend to much outside."

"What a pity you should be so overtaken with business," Burt sneered, as he turned upon his heel and went on his way.

Noon arrived, and the excitement was about at fever heat, when an escaped guard came flying from in the direction of the cabin-jail, crying:

"The Vigilantes! the Vigilantes! they will lynch Sugar-Coated Sam."

With the utterance of the words there was a pistol-shot, and the poor fellow dropped dead upon the ground.

Who had fired the shot? No one seemed to know.

Shakespeare instantly drew a pair of revolvers and sprung away toward the jail, followed by a number of the better class of citizens, who in turn were followed by the crowd at large.

They arrived in the vicinity of the jail, and put to flight a band of masked, whiskered men, who were upon the outside clamoring for admission—a part of the same gang who had previously been seen in the village.

After they were gone it was found that Sam was all right as far as safety was concerned. It was decided, however, to place a stronger guard around the jail, and ten men were detailed for that purpose, with orders to repel an attack coming in whatever shape it might, and to allow no one to see the prisoner, without permission of some of the principal citizens.

Evening came on; voting ceased, for every adult male had voted at least once. The next thing to do was to count the votes to decide who was to be mayor.

This was done publicly, and in the open air. The three pool-tenders mounted a box just outside the Bella Union saloon, and with the ticket receptacle between them, two of them began to count while the third kept tally.

"Yip! hip! hooray! Three jeers fer ther Star Bangled Spanner! Eecky signum sic dis-

temper syringe, ani domi plurus discombobbenate!" bellowed Shakespeare, rolling in upon the scene, with legs made unsteady by the frequency of his potations.

"In Fourth o' July Latin, thet means thet Sugar-Coated Sam's goin' ter take the cake—you bet—goin' ter waltz right inter our White House, an' show us how ter run a town skientific. Ten thousand million dollars ter bet ag'in' a single cent thet Sam'l scoops in the most votes."

"Thirty-two for Burt!"

"Thirty-two for Shakespeare."

"Ninety-seven for Sugar," said the tally.

"Heer thet, now, wull ye! Even I, thet Joaquin Miller o' Grim Gulch sink inter significance as compared wi' thet great sweet-toothed, 'lasses candy dandy, Sugar-Coated Samuel!" yelled the bullwhacker.

"Ninety-eight for Burt," cried the tally, whereat the bullwhacker looked crestfallen.

"Shenannigan hyar," he muttered. "Repeatin', or I'm a blarsted fule. Ef Burt gets it, then thet divil will be to pay."

But Burt didn't get it.

The last vote told the story.

With next to the last vote, Burt and Sugar-Coated Sam were tie at a hundred and eight; the last vote was for Sam, and made the hundred and ninth.

When it became known a general shout went up from those in favor of the election of the President of the Sugar-Coated Mining and Milling Company, while the others gave vent to grunts, not of approval, but of extreme dissatisfaction.

"Curses take my luck!" Burt said, addressing the girl sport, Sure-Pop, in an undertone. "I felt it would be so. Why did you not see that the attempted lynching was a success?"

"I did not care to," was the fearless reply.

"I knew your plans would fail in that respect, and was wary enough not to get myself mixed up in the trouble."

"Humph. You are smart! You hinted that you had made a discovery that were it known would place this Sugar-Coated Sam in a bad position! What is it?"

"How much you will be willing to give to know, is what I would prefer to know first?"

"Not a cent!"

"Then you'll not know a cent's worth."

"What? What do you mean?"

"I mean that you and I are quits, George Burt. I've got tired of playing second wife to my sister's third ship, and being bossed around by you as a sort of slave to your will. Hereafter, when you want me to do work for you, it will be necessary for me to see a stipulated sum of cash forthcoming, in advance, to satisfy any conscientious scruples I may chance to have. If you want me to turn up a trump card against Sugar-Coated Sam, I have no objection in case you've got a spare hundred dollars in your pocket. And I won't make such a failure as my sister did on the wife business."

"It does not follow that she failed," the Mormon said, "for Sam is now in jail, principally on account of her little business. I shall look well to it that he don't get out right away."

"Providing I give you some points against

him. Sure-Pop indeed. Very well. When you get ready to fork over the hundred, I can fix him effectually."

"I'll see you hung first!" he declared, grimly, and turned wrathfully away.

In the mean time a crowd were discussing the feasibility of releasing the new mayor from confinement, and after leaving Sure-Pop, Burt hurried forward to take a part in the business."

"I argue that it will be utterly rash to release that man until he is tried," he declared, vehemently. "He is a hard customer, and the last man you should think of making your head official. I propose that you take him from the jail and try him at once. If he is jury-judged guilty, hang him without ceremony. If he is judged not guilty, release him."

The proposition met with favor among a large majority, and so it was decided that Sugar-Coated Sam should have his trial at once in the moonlit main street of the town.

A jury was picked out of the most disinterested parties that could be found; Dutch Hans was appointed judge, and Shakespeare and Burt offered to act respectively for and against the prisoner as lawyers.

Then a big barrel was rolled out into the street, and Sugar-Coated Sam brought forth from his prison and mounted on top of it in full view of the audience. Other barrels and boxes were produced for and mounted by the judge, counsel, and jury in a circle, while the rude audience stood upon the ground surrounding, holding flaring torches to light up the peculiar scene.

Sam was very cool and collected, considering that he was quite well aware that an attempt would be made to convict him and give him the benefit of some taut rope.

He had been informed of his election to the office, but placed no expectation in ever being able to fill it, as he felt sure that, if a clear case could not be proven against him, as he was well aware could not be honestly done, Commodore Burt would invent some heinous charge of sufficient plausibility to preclude the idea of the people's ever accepting him, Sam, as mayor.

When things were all ready, Dutch Hans rapped upon his box with the heel of his stogy boot to enjoin silence, and the commodore arose to make the opening speech.

"Fellow-citizens," he began, "the purpose of this occasion, as you know, is to try the prisoner at the bar, known as Sugar-Coated Sam. Among you he is known by that *nom-de-plume*, and as a miner sport and speculator of his former life I am aware that you know little or nothing. Enough to say that he never bore any too savory a reputation, and after placing his wife in an insane asylum, because she refused to screen a terrible crime he had committed, he fled to the West to escape the vengeance of the law. That he is a thoroughbred rascal this act alone quite clearly proves, and if pains were taken you can easily find what an unenviable reputation he bears, in the East. Mrs. Singleton is a perfect lady, and though, on account of past bygones, she no longer cares for the man whose name she bears, she feels that it would be but right, that, after he receives his just dues, she should come in for what wealth he

leaves behind. Then, too, you naturally believe that Sugar-Coated Sam has been guilty of appropriating some money you had intrusted to his care. Why, then, should you parley over the matter? He is at best, an undesirable citizen, and where's the man with conscience to express the candid belief that Sugar-Coated Sam's death would not be a benefit to the community?"

"Right hyar he is—I, William Henery Shakespeare, ther poet o' ther Pacific—I'm ther galoot as durst rise an' spontaneously declare an' asseverate thet et can't be did. Sugar-Coated Sam can't be lynched, feller-heerers, fer the simple reason that he's as innercent o' ther charge ag'in' him as ever war Mary's lamb o' counterfeetin' Government bonds. No, sir, feller-citizens, jes' as squar' an' honest a galoot treads the inners o' Sugar-Coated Sam's boots, as eyer trod ther trail frum hyar ter Jordan, and at the same time I allow ye all know thet ther chap ye call commodore ain't nuthin' but a reg'lar mountain wolf in man's clothing. Ef ye don't know it, et's time ye did. He shouldn't be believed half so much as I, ther royal old rhyme-slinger, an' I allow until he cum nobody sed a word ag'in' ther sugar-coated pard. So thet goes ter show thet ther commodore hez got a grudge ag'in' Sam, an' is workin' on yer ter git ye ter help him wipe it out."

Rude though the logic and style of delivery, it made a perceptible impression, as was evidenced by a faint grunt of approbation on the part of several of the miners.

But, just then came a new witness.

"If you please," said Miss Bessie Burt stepping forward, "would it be asking too much, if I would give a little testimony in this case?"

"Yes!" the commodore yelled.

"No!" cried Judge Hans. "Say yoost vot ever ish drue."

"Then I wish to state that Commodore Burt, my uncle, is a great rascal and a Mormon Danite, whose sole motive is to kill me, in order to possess my property. In company with two of his wives, he is now here for that purpose. This charge of the third Mrs. Burt is but a black-mailing scheme against Sugar-Coated Sam, because he aroused Burt's anger by taking my part. They never saw the prisoner, before coming to Grim Gulch!"

"This is utter falsehood!" an authoritative voice cried—that of the female eccentric, Sure-Pop. "I am a United States detective, and Commodore Burt is my *aide*. The man on the prisoner's box is the famous outlaw, known to many of you as—*Deadwood Dick*."

CHAPTER VI.

A STRANGE HORROR.

HAD a bomb exploded in the camp it could not have created more astonishment than the sudden declaration of Sure-Pop.

"Deadwood Dick!" ejaculated Commodore Burt

"Deadwood Dick!" cried several others—"the dare-devil road-agent!"

"Ay, Deadwood Dick, the outlaw of a dozen

aliases!" Sure-Pop replied, triumphantly. "He came quietly among you this time, to ply his thieving vocation, and I've been watching him, and now I expose him!"

"It is well. At last I know your game!" Bumblebee Bob cried, leaping forward. "Hurrah for the new mayor, and death to all who oppose him!"

And, following his words, he leveled his pistol at the bosom of the Danite's wife and fired.

With a cry of pain, the beautiful but misguided woman threw up her arms and fell to the ground. An instant later the vicinity of the trial-stand was in excited commotion—a pandemonium of wild and warlike sounds.

It seemed as if a campaign of incarnate warfare had opened upon the spot.

The torches had been dashed out, to be succeeded by the vivid flashes from revolvers, whose reports rung out on every side with deadly spitefulness, accompanied by yells of pain and human agony.

Two party cries rung loud and fierce above the din—two cries which spoke of opposing elements that were struggling fiercely for victory:

"Long live Deadwood Dick, Mayor of Grim Gulch!"

"Death to Deadwood Dick, the road-agent!"

In the darkness that shrouded the street of the lone mountain town it was hard to tell which party was getting the worst of it, but the rapid rattle of firearms and the succeeding yells of distress fully evidenced the fact that it was a deadly affray in the fullest sense of the word.

In the beginning of the battle Deadwood Dick (whom the reader has hitherto known as Sugar-Coated Sam) was hastily and quietly removed from his stand, and carried back to the rude cabin jail, Commodore Burt being one of the leaders in the matter, and the turnkey of the prison.

"You see it would be bad policy for me, the future mayor, to relinquish hold on so valuable a bonanza as you," he said, with a sneer, as he took a last look at the prisoner, and then left him to himself, locking him in.

The two men who had assisted in returning Dick to the jail were left on guard, and Burt returned to the neighborhood of the battle, which was raging as hot as ever.

But the valiant commodore was careful to keep himself out of the path of the flying bullets, instead of rushing forward to take a hand in the conflict. He was not over-brave at any time, and much less when a deadly struggle appealed to his manly qualities for succor.

But the conflict could not always be, and soon there was a lull in the uproar caused by one party beating a precipitate retreat.

And it might have been noticeable to a close observer, that this party was principally composed of the red-whiskered men who had been so numerous during the election.

Although a dash was made in pursuit of them, it resulted only in eliciting a yell of defiance.

The victors returned to the scene of the conflict and lighting torches, proceeded to examine the fallen.

There were a score all one, and told, and of

the lot not one of the Red Beards! All citizens were they who had succumbed.

Some were dead, some were fatally wounded, and others were merely disabled.

Among the latter was Bessie Burt, who had been stunned by a blow, but now arose fully recovered from the shock and otherwise uninjured.

As no attempt was made to intercept her she gladly hastened away from the sickening scene, toward her own cabin shanty.

But a few steps had she gone, however, ere she stumbled and nearly fell over the figure of Bumblebee Bob, which lay upon the ground in the shadow of a shanty, where he must have crawled from the scene of the affray.

A groan from the man apprised her that he was not dead, and she accordingly paused and bent over him, scarcely knowing what else to do.

The eyes opened, and she discovered for the first time that they were not a man's orbs, but those of a woman.

The lips which were nearly covered by beard then parted, and Bumblebee Bob spoke:

"Ah! a friendly face. I am glad. I am badly wounded, and unless I have immediate care I'm done for. Will you assist me to a place of safety?"

"Who are you?" Bessie asked a little doubtful what to do.

"I am Bumblebee Bob. I am friendly to the cause of Deadwood Dick, as, I trust, you are, also."

"You are a woman in male disguise!" Bessie asserted.

The wounded person gave a start.

"I supposed my disguise was impenetrable," was the reply. "But I know you will not bring me harm—your face is too good to belong to a cruel or heartless person. I am a woman—I am Calamity Jane, the wife of Deadwood Dick."

"Why are you here in disguise, then?"

"Because my husband bade me remain behind, while he went forth to seek us a home; but, knowing his peculiarities of running into peril, I could not resist the temptation to secretly follow him, and be near him. I would not like to have him know I am here, however, for I promised him I would remain where he left me. If you will take me to your home, and give me what assistance you can, you shall be properly rewarded."

"I will, of course, and will do all I can for you," Bessie said, assisting her to arise, and supporting her as best she could. "I would be cruel indeed to turn you over to the authorities in your present condition."

And so, by slow stages, they walked toward the shanty of Miss Burt, the darkness screening them from observation.

The shanty was finally reached. Originally it was a tent, but now board sides took the place of canvas ones, only the top of the latter material being retained.

Entering, and securing the door behind them, Miss Burt assisted Calamity to a rude bed, in a rear apartment and then procured a lantern and lit it.

"I shall have to keep you shut up for the

present," she said, "as I can keep you from curious eyes here. Should my enemy, Commodore Burt, find out that you were here, he would immediately herald the news far and near, and I fear that I would be judged harshly for taking you in. But, don't worry about it, because I don't apprehend that any one will be the wiser for your presence here."

Among the losers by the conflict, the bullwhacker, Shakespeare, came in for special mention. A flying bullet had cleanly shaven the nose from his face, and done the job as neatly as a surgeon's knife could have done.

Many a man of even weaker or stronger constitution would have taken to his bed with such a mishap, but not so with the poet.

Although wincing with pain, he salted the wound to stop the flow of blood, and then bandaged it sorrowfully up, the cut to his pride apparently being harder than the actual pain from the wound.

"Tork about yer martyrs o' anshent times, pilgrims, or yer soldiers who fell on the fields o' Bull Run—et ain't no sarcumstance," he observed, with a tear in either eye. "When a mortal's proboscis is gone, gents, I tell ye he's lost one o' ther component parts o' man. Thet aire nose o' mine war'n't no great guns fur beauty, but I tell ye et war some on smell, an' war a connoisseur at jedgin' ther qualities o' gud hash or whisky. An', too, et could tell when a storm war brewin', or thar war Injuns near. Alas! now et is gone!"

"All of which came of your shoving it into other people's business, no doubt," Commodore Burt said, as he came forward to inspect the dead and wounded. "However, it may allay some of the regret at your loss, when you see the man you were working for swinging in mid-air."

"Nary a time, you Mormon skunk! Plenty o' time will I hev ter grow another proboscis, ere you see Deadwood Dick performin' on tight rope."

"I reckon ye don't lie about thet, Bill," a miner said. "I've heerd allowed as Deadwood Dick has as many lives as a cat."

"But I say he has run to the end of his trail!" Burt declared; "for, instead of having escaped, as you all supposed, I have him safely lodged in the jail."

This news was received with a shout of approval by all except the poet.

There was a grim, dissatisfied look upon his bandaged phiz.

"I was in hopes ther b'ye war off," he muttered to himself, "tho' he an' I war nevyer on ther best o' terms."

"Some say he is too 'chic,'
Ther famuss Deadwood Dick,
But I allows he knows his little biz,
An' 'ca'se he wears gud clothes,
An' hez nevyer lost his nose,
My confarence in Dicky et has riz."

"Hurrah! If we've got him, why not make sure of him while we have got him?" one miner cried. "Et ain't good policy to keep bad eggs long, or they're apt to create an un,

healthy smell. The same wi' Deadwood Dick—Ef we keep him long, like as not he'll make it unhealthy for us."

"Them's my ideas," another man volunteered. "Hit the iron while it is hot."

"Then, if all are willing, I have no objections to finishing the job at once," Burt declared, secretly exultant. "We've fairly got our hand into business to-night, and needn't be at all bashful. Come! All who wish to attend this picnic, forward march!"

With cries of approval, the main body of the citizens followed him toward the jail, which was further up the street; but, as they approached the shanty it took but a glance for them to see, in the lurid light of their torches, that they had been cheated out of their contemplated vengeance.

Leaning up against the cabin, rigid and stiff, was one of the guards—dead! A knife in his breast told how he had gone off.

The other guard was nowhere to be seen, but in the open doorway of the cabin lay the body of a man, from which the head was missing.

At first it was thought that this was the other guard, but when all eyes perceived that the headless trunk was clad in the faultless raiment of the late President of the Sugar-Coated Mining and Milling Company, opinions were of course changed.

Here was Sugar-Coated Sam, *alias* Deadwood Dick, minus his head, which was nowhere to be found!

What did it mean?

Who had wrought this silent and summary vengeance?

CHAPTER VII.

TREATING OF THE GHOSTLY.

THE excitement which the tragedy and mystery raised in Grim Gulch was unprecedented in its history. Men rushed here and there; women wept and wrung their hands in terror. The body of the beheaded prisoner was buried, the next morning, as also were the remains of the other dead of the town, and then the people looked each other in the face, and mentally asked, "What next?" What new phase of excitement was destined for the little mining city.

But, after a seven days' wonder, the excitement died out somewhat, and Grim Gulch settled back into her monotonous routine of mining existence, with only now and then a fight or a drunk to create any unusual stir.

Commodore Burt had gradually come to be regarded as mayor, which was exceedingly to his liking. When a dispute or quarrel of any kind occurred, he was looked to to pronounce such justice as the case required.

Then, too, the majority of the citizens had agreed that it was fair that Mrs. Singleton, as she called herself, should come into possession of Sugar-Coated Sam's interests in the mining company bearing his title, and accordingly she had appointed Commodore Burt as receiver for her, of all profits of said interest.

Which placed everything in the Mormon's hands, and which was quite according to his pre-arranged determination.

In the mean time, at the home of Bessie Burt, Calamity Jane lay upon the bed where she had been placed, lingering, as it were between life and death.

She had been shot in five places, during the conflict, and two bullets had passed in close proximity to the left lung. These were the most serious of the five wounds, and were not necessarily fatal, had she been in experienced hands. But, though careful and tender in nursing, Bessie could do nothing further than to wash the wounds or bandage them, and prepare such little dishes as the sick girl required.

She begged leave to call in some person who had a knowledge of surgery, but Calamity refused, fearing that the populace would learn who she was, and rise against her, as Deadwood Dick's wife.

Thus the days dragged by—some of them exceedingly painful days to her—others restful and more bearable, when she would be quite light-spirited.

"No use of trying to help me," she would say, whenever Bessie would mention calling in aid. "I knew I was done for, when them two bitin' bullits hit me, an' I allow a surgeon would only shorten my days, if he were to go probin' around for the cold lead. No! no! let me be—I'm right as I am, and one of these days I'll be better off. Have you heard anything new concerning Deadwood Dick?"

Of course Bessie had heard of the death of Deadwood Dick, but she had kept the knowledge of his tragic fate from Calamity, knowing how the terrible news must distress and further prostrate her; hence Bessie had answered her that he was free—as indeed, he was, of the cares of this life, if so be that he was really dead.

One day, however, about a week and a half after the tragedy, when Bessie entered the sick room, she found Calamity looking very white and tearful, as she lay back upon the pillows.

"Are you feeling worse, dear?" Bessie asked, approaching the bedside.

"Oh! so much worse," was the sad answer, accompanied by a reproachful look. "I have just sustained a shock which I could better have withstood, at first, when stronger, had you told me the worst."

"You know, then—" Bessie faltered, in mixed anxiety and relief.

"That Deadwood Dick is dead—yes. Why did you not tell me this at first?"

"Because I wished to spare you the pain, until you got better."

"You we e considerate, true, but I could have borne the blow better, at first. I shall never be any better, in this world—I am well satisfied of that. Do you believe my husband is really dead?"

"I have no reason to believe otherwise, Mrs. Harris, but all that I know about the matter, is what others have heard said. But, how did you learn of his death?"

"I overheard a customer of yours in the next room say 'since Deadwood Dick was planted,' and knew by that. Tell me all—everything concerning what has happened. I am brave, now, and would rather know the worst, than not."

So Bessie was forced to relate such circumstances of Dick's death as had come to her hearing.

Calamity heard her through, her face scarcely changing in expression; nor did she grow hysterical at the dread recital, as some women would have done.

"It is terrible, if true," she said, in a sad tone, when Bessie had concluded.

"But something tells me it was not my husband's headless body that was found. Oh! that I could know the truth! If I only had a little more strength—"

"But you haven't, and you must remain quiet," Bessie said, firmly. "It would be rash for you to attempt to leave your bed."

"I suppose so. Oh! this is bitter," Calamity moaned, burying her face in the pillow, and sobbing.

That afternoon, however, she cheered up, visibly, and called Bessie to her bedside.

"I feel better," she said, "and think I shall get well, after all. At least, while there is life there is hope. You have never told me of yourself, Bessie? Have you parents living? Every person has a life history—tell me yours."

"I have no parents living," Bessie replied, sorrowfully. "My mother died when I was a small child—my father perished, it is said, in a conflict between Mormons and Gentiles, four years ago."

"Ah! your people were Mormons, then?"

"My father was a settler in Utah, and perforce a member of the Mormon church. He was, however, a secret foe to polygamy, and had but one wife. In consequence of this, he was not a favorite among the Mormons, but I don't think they bore him any positive enmity. Sometimes I have had strange fears that he did not fall in the affray with the Gentiles, as was said, but fell a prey to the Danites. I have heard him privately speak in favor of the Gentiles, one of whom he really was at heart, and it does not seem probable to me that he would take up arms against them. I was attending school at Salt Lake City at the time, and therefore am in the dark concerning his fate."

"After his death, you left Utah?"

"Yes, I was forced to, or become a victim of an existence I abhor. After my father's death, a will purported to have been written by him, was produced and read to me. I now believe, and always shall believe, that it was a forgery. In this will, my father bequeathed me to his own brother, Commodore Burt, for his fourth wife. All his landed estate and money he willed to me, until my marriage—then it was to be handed over to my husband—my own uncle—to do with as he might choose. When I heard these strange stipulations, my very being became filled with unutterable horror. And, more especially so, when I was told that Commodore Burt was coming the next day to claim me as his fourth wife, under sanction of the church. Rather than become his prey, death in any phase seemed welcome to me. Resolved not to yield even to the mandate of my father's will, I made hasty preparations, and that night escaped from my school and from the city, and fled for my father's country residence. I knew where he always kept his money, and before daybreak I

was in possession of the small sum of five hundred dollars he had laid by, and was flying for the East.

"It was now a matter of life and death with me—the laws of Mormonism told me this. I knew that the commodore would put Danite agents upon my trail, with instructions to take me, dead or alive. It would not matter to him which—indeed, I knew my death would be most to his liking, as my father's estate would go to him all the same.

"Need I tell you the rest? I fled from Utah eastward—I tried to escape the pursuing demons of the Mormon church, by hiding myself in the towns under various aliases, but all to no avail.

"The Danite hounds tracked me with the persistency of demons, and I would scarcely get settled in one place ere their near presence would frighten me into flight to some other. And in this way I have flown, until at last I sought this remote region, but only to find my relentless foe, the commodore, here nearly as soon as I. I, however, now resolved to remain and fight it out, if need be. He cannot do more than kill me."

"I approve of your grit," Calamity said, heartily. "Don't get skeered until you're hurt. You're in Uncle Sam's country yet, and I allow Mormon laws won't work hyar. All yer enemy can do is pop you over, and I reckon he'll think twice before doing that."

Since finding the headless remains of Sugar-Coated Sam, *alias* Deadwood Dick, the poet and publisher had been strangely quiet for a man of his roustabout and hilarious character.

To be sure, he had lost one of the most prominent features of his visage, which fact might account for his quiet; but then, a sort of general despondency seemed to have settled over him; he was nervous and watchful, as if about to receive a blow; his poetical fits were few and far between—the issues of the *Grim Gulch Gazetteer* were irregular and sourly edited.

"What's the matter wi' Shake?" the miners would ask of each other.

"He looks like he was mournin' fer his mother-in-law."

"Or his proboscis, fer instance."

But when questioned on the matter, the bullwhacker poet would sadly shake his head.

"Nary a mourn fer mother-'n-law, b'yees," he would say, "'ca'se I nevyer hed one.

'An' as fer ther nose,
Et's wrapt in repose—
Et war a bad dose—
A shave werry close,
But I've cradled my woes,
As every one knows.'

"No, et ain't on account o' ther loss o' my smell thet I'm dubious, feller-pilgrims—nary a time. I've got a premonition o' suthin' wuss than losin' one's nasal fluke, you bet, or ye wouldn't see William Henry Shakespeare down in ther mouth. Ye're goin' ter git a shock, d'rectly, my noble guzzlers—a shock what'll warn ye et's high time ter be dustin' up yer disused Testaments, an' devote yer spare mo-

ments tew reflectin' on the runsartinties uv ther ethereal future."

Looking over the rough citizens of Grim Gulch, it would seem probable that few, if any of them, had ever handled a Bible, more especially in the latter years of their lives.

And it appeared there was something in Shakespeare's premonition, for a few evenings later a man came rushing into the Bella Union, yelling incoherently, and gesticulating more like a lunatic than a sane person. He trembled in every limb, and his teeth chattered as though he was wrestling with a chill.

"Speak—what's ther matter?" one of the miners demanded, shaking him roughly. "Out with it!"

"Ghosts! g-h-o-s-t-s!" the poor fellow answered. "D-d-deadwood Dick—grave!"

Taking the cue, the occupants of the saloon rushed forth into the street.

Deadwood Dick's grave was located upon a knoll, three or four hundred yards away, and in full view from the street in front of the Bella Union.

As the crowd poured forth into the street, their eyes turned upon this mound, and cries of horror and consternation broke from their lips.

Mounted upon some invisible object in mid-air, a dozen feet above the grave, were the garments and the seeming body of Deadwood Dick, yet headless, for the hat sat upon the collar of the jacket.

And around and over all shone a weird phosphorescent light.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE POET GOES A JOURNEY.

WHAT did it mean?

Had Deadwood Dick returned to the earthly as a spiritual wanderer, minus his head?

Even the immortal Shakespeare seemed a little nervous.

"Tork, now, wull ye," he whispered. "Say thet William Henry Shakespeare ain't a prognosticator, as well as a poet, hey? Waal, I should chuckle—I should! Ghosts, boyees—ghosts! reliable, genywine, bony-fried article, too. Oh! Job, whar is thy monument o' patience, ter slip under my gallusses, an' stay my spine, in this hour o' need?"

"Pooh! et's somebody a-tryin' tricks on us; I don't believe in ghosts," one miner finally became bold enough to declare. "Ye ken't shet my gazin' trap up wi' sech nonsense."

"Ner I," agreed another.

"That's right, boys; don't take any stock in such rubbish," advised Commodore Burt, coming along. "Supernatural visitations invariably originate with weak minds and vivid imaginations. I dare say if you toss a couple of bullets over in the direction of the robber's grave, you won't have any further trouble, whatever."

"S'posin' we try it," suggested a citizen, drawing a revolver. "If thar's a human behind them togs o' Deadwood Dick, I opine I can tickle him fu'st time trying."

And raising his weapon, he aimed and fired.

Instead of a cry of pain, which many of the

spectators had expected to hear, there came a wild eldritch peal of laughter, which seemed to echo and re-echo, mockingly, and caused a chill of doubt and consternation to creep down the backbones of nearly every one who heard it. And not only one laugh was there, but a dozen or more, coming from as many different directions.

Was there an army of ghostly visitors surrounding the town?

Ha! what strange visions were these that greeted the citizens' eyes, as, on gazing around at different house-tops, they beheld ghostly white-robed figures positioned there, each with the right hand pointed accusingly down at the astounded beholders.

From these specters the peals of laughter seemed to emanate, and grim and uncanny enough they looked, the same phosphorescent halo of light that surrounded the garments of Deadwood Dick, being perceptible around his phantom guard.

"Curses on me!" Commodore Burt gasped, quaking with affright, "what does all this mean? Fire, somebody—fire and break this infernal spell!"

Only one man was there in the crowd who had composure enough to do so, and he drew a pistol and fired at the nearest of the ghostly figures on the house-tops.

Bang went the weapon spitefully!

"Ha! ha! ha!" came another shriek of derisive laughter, then, almost as quick as a flash of lightning, the phantom figures disappeared from the house-tops, and darkness reigned supreme. It was the same over at Deadwood Dick's grave. The resurrected garments of the ex-outlaw were no longer to be seen, nor was any object in the vicinity of his grave, owing to the gloom.

And, yet, this fact seemed hardly a relief to the aroused populace. They stood still, for some time after the disappearance of the apparitions, in fear lest they should return.

Thoroughly cowed and frightened were a great majority of them, while a few pretended to be perfectly composed, although they really were as much "put out" as their comrades.

Gradually, however, they slunk away, and no more were seen till day dawned again over the golden gulch.

By this time, a great many had partially regained their spirits, but a number of the badly frightened packed their "kit," and took the morning stage, bound to other "lays."

During the morning an old, ragged and decrepit man, who walked with a gnarled staff, and whose long tangled hair and beard was as white as driven snow, made his appearance in camp.

He was the same party whom Sugar-Coated Sam had taken to his tent, the night before the safe robbery, and who had afterward been found missing.

He was hatless, now, and wandered silently about, an object of curiosity and suspicion to the miners.

About noon he met Commodore Burt face to face, just in front of the Bella Union, and shook his fist in the latter's face, with a guttural and unintelligible utterance, after which he hobbled

on, while, for several moments the Mormon stood still, pale, and like one dazed. Then a shudder passed over him, and an angry flush came to relieve the pallor upon his cheek.

"Curses on me—the thought nearly electrified me," he muttered, gazing after the stranger. "But, pshaw! the old lunatic is some harmless fool who does not know what he is doing. If I thought there could be any truth—"

Without finishing, he gritted his teeth and re-entered the Bella Union.

Later, he returned to McDuff's boarding-house and to his room, where the woman who had claimed to be Mrs. Sam Singleton was seated, engaged in sewing.

"Well?" she said inquiringly, as he entered, "what now?"—for she perceived by his expression that something was wrong.

"Enough to make me feel uncomfortable," he growled, pacing the floor. "Did you see the old codger on the street with snow-white hair and beard?"

"No!"

"Well, I did, and a thought entered my mind that he was my bitterest enemy, here to finish me."

"Pshaw! you are weakening."

"By no means. I am in a fair way of owning the town, if this ghost business only scares off a few more of the miners."

"To whom do you assign the authorship of the apparitions?"

"I'm puzzled. If, as I have sometimes believed, Deadwood Dick is alive and well, to-day—then I am as good as assured that he is the prime instigator. But if he's dead, I am in the dark, unless the old pilgrim is at the bottom of it."

"Deadwood Dick cannot well be alive after being found dead and headless."

"Who knows for certain that it really was his body that we found? To be sure, the clothes were recognized as belonging to him, but that was all. His head was gone, and nobody could have sworn to the figure."

"It will be dangerous for us here in case he is alive."

"Undoubtedly, if, as I suspect, he is at the head of a band of outlaws again. He is a steel-bar I would not care to cope with, even with odds in my favor. I shall keep on the lookout and we must be prepared to flee at any moment. First, however, we must be sure that two persons are dead—the girl, Bessie, and the old ragamuffin who is at present in town. You must attend to the latter case at once, and I will look-out for the girl."

"Ugh! you know my horror of this kind of work?"

"I also know your appetite for gold," he replied. "You know better than to fool with me."

The woman did not reply, but by the pallor which overspread her face, it became evident that she did know better.

When he had taken his departure, she arose and procured a shawl and pistol, and laid them upon the table.

With dread a majority of the citizens saw another night's grim and dense shadows covering

the face of the earth. What would another night bring forth in the line of ghostly visitations?

Shakespeare, the poet, seemed similarly affected, and was nervous as such a man well could be. He however imbibed freely of the Bella Union "condoler," and thereby gained courage to make a call upon Miss Bessie Burt as the sun was setting.

Bessie was seated in the doorway of her little habitation, engaged in sewing buttons on some pilgrim's picturesque red shirt, and looked up with a bow, as the bullwhacker came up,

"Gud eve, Miss Bessie Burt!
I see upon a shirt
You aire earnin' yer pay-dirt
'Rocks' w'ot give ter life ther spurt."

tipping his hat. "So I thort I'd cum over on a mission o' business an' pleasure—business, in ther way o' bringin' ye sum togs to laundry for me—pleasure, by announcin' my extremest and most emphatic admiration of yourself."

"Thank you, sir. I am grateful for the work to do, but cannot appreciate a stranger's admiration."

"Especially when they're big, ongainly cusses, an' minus a nose," nodded the bullwhacker, comprehendingly. "Oh! yes, I know I ain't a Beau Brummel no more; my beauty has faded an' gone like ther hair frum a raccoon's snout; but then, my lay-out don't include poppin' ther momentous, an' makin' luv—no, sir-ee, bobtail burro. I'm on an ontirely different trail, you bet yer boots! Instead o' axin' ye ter git up an' go harnessed wi' me, I wish ter express my admiration fer yer success in so long keepin' yer secret guest away from the gaze of the public."

Bessie started. Least of all persons, did she suppose the bullwhacker to be suspicious on this score.

"What do you mean, sir?" she asked, trying to preserve an unruffled countenance. "Who—what do you refer to?"

"Oh! you're sly, I know, but I'm up ter yer dodge, an' I allow et wouldn't be healthy fer ye, if the townspeople know what I know. Howsumdever, thet's neither heer ner thar, an' as I am favorable ter yer cause, count my vocab-trap hermetically glued shut."

And with this assurance, he turned and strode away.

Immediately afterward Bessie entered Calamity's room and communicated the substance of her interview with the bullwhacker poet.

"I know him, and so did Dick," Calamity said, "and while he is mean enough to betray me, I do not think that is his game, if, indeed, he knows that I am really here. He probably has some other game afoot."

"I only hope he does not betray you," Bessie said, "for if he should, Heaven only knows how we should fare."

But it was evidently not the burly poet's intention to betray the presence of Calamity to the townspeople, as future developments will show.

Soon after leaving Bessie's home he mounted his mule, which was grazing along the street near the Bella Union, and rode away down the

gulch, into the gloom of the approaching night, followed by the gaze of many of the citizens, whose curiosity was aroused.

Following the eastward course of the gulch for a mile or so, he turned off into a narrower defile between two mighty walls of mountain rock, where darkness reigned supreme.

The *burro*, however, seemed equal to the somewhat difficult task of threading the passage, while Shakespeare tried to dispel the monotonous loneliness of the ride by frequent utterance of sundry original rhymes.

In this way they proceeded for several hours, through one of the wildest, ruggedest seams in the brow of nature, until, when it was about the midnight hour, they emerged into a sort of open glen, fringed close beside the perpendicular surrounding walls with gaunt, spectral dead pines.

Here Shakespeare drew rein and gazed rather nervously around him.

"Waal, hyar am I, in the place whar I war directed to come," he muttered, glancing at a scrap of paper which he held in his hand. "I allow this must be ther place, an' now I must quiet my nerves fer w'ot's ter foller."

It was an action which he knew pretty well how to perform. Taking a quart flask of "bug-juice" from his pocket, he proceeded to get away with a good half of it, in the most approved manner, after which his spirits seemed somewhat braced up.

And well was there need, for at this juncture, from either side of the gloomy glen, at a dozen different points of the compass, appeared the spectral, white-robed figures of the night before, with arms outstretched as they advanced in a bee-line toward the mule-mounted poet, whose countenance began to assume an ashen pallor, and teeth began to chatter, in spite of the "bracer" he had just partaken of.

Closer and closer glided the white figures, surrounded by the strange phosphorescent halo, until they formed a ghostly circle around the bullwhacker, each with a draped arm pointed accusingly at him, while an unearthly groan escaped them in chorus.

"Oh! Lordy! I wish I war back in Grim Gulch!" Shakespeare gasped, while even his long-eared companion gave vent to a bray of terror.

CHAPTER IX.

DARK PROMISE AHEAD.

COMMODORE BURT's third wife, who had tried the "black" game on Sugar-Coated Sam, was emphatically a woman of a business.

The daughter of a bloody-handed Mormon Danite she had been reared amid scenes well calculated to harden even a woman's heart; hence she did not hesitate at the murderous work Burt had planned for her; she would be but fulfilling his desire, which, according to the doctrine of the Mormon Church must be her sole object in life.

Therefore she deliberately planned to murder the old tramp, whom some one had christened Snow Flake, because of his snow-white beard.

Waiting until it was quite dark, she left her room, with a shawl wrapped around her and

partly thrown over her head, and hurried down the street toward the Bella Union.

She was just about to take a look into that thriving establishment, when her victim came hobbling out, and walked rapidly away, all appearances of lameness gone as soon as he entered the dark, unlighted street.

She could have struck him down, as he passed her, but knew it was a dangerous locality to boldly accomplish her mission, and so waited until he had got a few yards away, and then followed swiftly and silently in pursuit.

As soon as she became satisfied that he was not aware of her pursuit, she quickened her footsteps. Soon she was within arm's reach of him, stepping when he stepped.

Soon out from under her shawl came an up-raised hand, in which was grasped a gleaming knife, then bounded forward to do her deadly work just as the old tramp wheeled suddenly, and fired upon her with a pistol which he held in his hand.

"Oho! you find it a bad trail to follow me, eh?" he exclaimed, as she threw up her hands, and fell back to the ground. "You see I chance to have eyes in the back part of my head, woman!"

Probably Mrs. Burt did not hear or comprehend his words. She gave but a few struggles, and then became still in death.

"Ugh! Death is a fearful thing," the old man mused, as he bent over her and peered into her face; "but it can be no awful thing to kill one whose hand is seeking one's own life. And then—this is but vengeance!"

An hour later, Commodore Burt might have been seen knocking at the door of Bessie Burt's shanty.

Not thinking but what it was some of her customers, come with or for a package, she opened the door, and without waiting for an invitation, the commodore pushed rudely past her, into the house.

"Sir!" she exclaimed, alarmed at this sudden intrusion.

"Madam!" he retorted, with a sneer, "you perceive that I am here, and I presume you can guess my business."

"I do not care to consider your business, sir; please to leave my house."

"Ha! ha! I refuse."

"Then I'll scream for help, you ruffian. Leave my house. I command you!"

"Command as much as you please—I've no objections. As for me, I never pay the least attention to feminine commands, and as for your screaming for help, I'll assure you there's no sugar-coated pilgrims around to come to your rescue. The long and short of the matter is, I'm here for a purpose, in which it is not my intention to be balked. Either you shall take a solemn oath that you will marry me, or when I leave this ranch, your life-blood will be making fancy figures upon your earthen carpet here. Swear that you will marry me, or I will murder you."

"Monster! ruffian! brutal!" was the undaunted answer.

"Oh! yes, I know. Those are Sunday names for me—pet names. I am all they signify, and

more, too, as you will find, before you have done with me. Promise to become the fourth Mrs. Commodore Burt, and we will go back to Salt Lake and enjoy the snug little property your father left behind."

"Never! I will die first!"

"You can have your choice about that, of course. I shall not try to urge you, or dictate to you! If you prefer to climb the golden stairs rather than double in a life of unalloyed bliss with me, I can assist you off, with but short notice. I can get plenty of wives, for that matter, Brother Jones having offered to bequeath me his double-kit. So you see, I am really doing a great thing in offering you the chance for life."

"You loathsome reptile! I would endure the bitterest torture human wit can invent before I'd consent to become your victim. Kill me you dare not, for you are not in Utah now, where a so-called Church shields villainy and crime; therefore, once and for all, *I defy you!*"

"Then, curse you, you shall have the reward that your defiance merits!" he cried, savagely, and drawing a dirk from a side pocket, he leaped toward her, the gleam of a fiend incarnate in his eyes.

Upraised was the weapon, ready for the blow, when there was a pistol-shot; the arm that clutched the dirk fell to his side, and a howl of pain and rage burst from his lips.

The bullet had completely shattered his right wrist!

Calamity Jane it was who fired the shot, she having struggled to her feet from her sick bed, and reached the door of her bedroom in time to send the bullet that saved Bessie's life.

Ere Burt could transfer the dagger to his other hand, he was seized by a man who at that instant bounded into the room, and borne bodily out into the dark night, and rapidly away from the cabin.

"Father! father!" Bessie screamed, rushing to the door.

Then she sunk to the floor, and covered her face with her hands, while she shook with violent sobs.

"What is it, dearest?" Calamity said, steadying herself by chairs, and managing to reach the poor waif's side.

"Oh, father! Did you see him—the white-haired old man who bore my enemy away? Did you see him, I say? Was he alive, or was it a terrible apparition?"

"Well, I should opine he was pretty *live*, by the way he bounced the commodore," Calamity replied, smiling. "There, now, don't cry after the play's over. I allow the commodore won't trouble you any more."

"But my father—that was, alive, but old and white-haired. Oh! tell me, what can all this mean?"

"Well, it savors like the old man ain't dead at all, but has turned up just in time to hev a little picnic with his brother. So cheer up and give me a lift back to bed, if you can, because I find I'm weaker than I supposed."

"Oh! to be sure. I am so inconsiderate. Why did you ever leave your bed, when you are not able?"

"Well, I opine if I hadn't you'd be ready for

a pine box about this time. I heard that thar was business in the commodore, and I managed to get to the fore just in time to wing him. I reckon I'll be all right, as soon as I get off from my unsteady pedals."

But she reckoned without her host that time. By her exertion she had quite exhausted her limited strength, and swooned ere she could reach her bed, so that Bessie was obliged to carry her.

And it was only after an hour of incessant application of restoratives that the brave girl once more opened her eyes.

From the moment the commodore was borne from the cabin by the Unknown, his senses forsook him.

Great was the pain which the pistol-wound caused him, but it is not probable that he would have fainted had he not found himself tightly clinched in the iron grasp of the mysterious stranger whom Bessie had called father. Inspired by a nameless terror over which he had no control, little wonder the Danite felt his senses leaving him.

When he once more awoke to consciousness, it was with a horrified start—he scarcely knew why, more than that an expectancy of something awful possessed him. He was lying upon his back on the ground, and an effort to rise proved to him that he was free and unfettered. But as he arose to a sitting posture, a half-sheet of paper slid from his breast to the ground, upon which was rudely printed, in phosphorescent letters, the single word:

"BEWARE!"

Significant in all its untold meaning, it warned him that for some cause his life had been spared.

With a curse, he was about to rise to his feet, when he made another discovery which gave him a greater start than the finding of the paper had caused him, for, lying upon the ground beside him was his lifeless wife, whom he had commissioned to dispose of the stranger—the same woman who had claimed to be the wife of Sugar-Coated Sam.

"Ha! this tells the story to me, plainer than words," the Danite muttered. "I know now who the white-bearded devil is—he whom I have all all along supposed six feet under the sod. Ugh! this is bad—bad—bad!"

And laboring under the sickening excitement of fear and horror, the plotter sprung to his feet and left the spot.

The ghostly visitants of the previous night did not return, and thereat the citizens felt greatly relieved.

After leaving the side of his murdered companion in crime, Commodore Burt had sought his room at McDuff's, and locked himself in, to finish the night in concocting plans for the future.

On the following morning when he emerged therefrom, it was to enter the Bella Union. There he dispatched a "three-finger shoulder-bracer," after which he mounted a barrel in the center of the pavilion.

With curiosity a number of bystanders gathered near, and when a sufficient crowd was collected the Danite looked them over and "sized" them carefully.

He saw a number of his own backers in the lot, and knew that they were nearly a majority, and that was all he wanted.

"Gentlemen!" he said, "I have heard several complaints lately—even since the death of Deadwood Dick—to the effect that some one of the townspeople or other are constantly losing their things through the agency of a sneak thief—little sums here and there, to be sure, but aggregating largely in the long run. These little thefts are carried on systematically, and are traceable to the hand of some party fully acquainted with the business. What, then, would you say, if I were to disclose to you the fact that I have discovered the author of the deviltry?"

"Hurra! show us the varmint, an' it's to tha top av a three we'll be afther hoistin' 'im," a burly Irishman declared.

"Yas, them ar' ther sentiments right frum ther bed-rock. Show us ther pilgrim w'ot's appropriatin' our circulation, an' we're bound ter do ther elevated thing by him, best we know how," another miner chimed in.

"I have to repeat that I have discovered the guilty one, and who do you suppose it is?"

"Dunno! who?" a chorus of voices cried, eagerly.

"The wife of Deadwood Dick—Calamity Jane, as she is better known. Unknown to any of you, she is in your midst plying her vocation."

"Where? where?"

"She can easily be found, by searching the ranch kept by the woman, Bessie Burt, who is also her coadjutor. The woman, Calamity, when approached, very cleverly feigns illness, but the dodge don't hold out, when no one is around."

"Then, let's bounce her—let's send 'er up to search for her late husband," a miner cried, who had officiated at several lynching bees, and had a craving for more. "All in favor, make manifest by yelling."

"I!" "I!" "Hyar!" came in a great shout.

"Contrary, no!" proposed the miner.

There was not one dissenting voice. The commodore chuckled maliciously as he noted the fact.

"Then to-night let it be for us to do the job. We can just as well take 'em off their guard, and perhaps save several of our own party's lives, as Calamity Jane is always on guard."

And so it was arranged that a raid should be made that very night, and Calamity and Bessie treated to a dose of that border medicine known as lynch law.

CHAPTER X.

A GHOSTLY CONFERENCE.

LET us return to the bullwhacker poet, Shakespeare, and see what came of the little adventure he had entered into.

We left him the center figure of a decidedly picturesque circle, the outer edge of which was formed of the mysterious white-draped figures

whom he had first seen upon the tops of the shanties in Grim Gulch.

"Now, see hyar, gents! This ain't really a squar' deal," he expostulated. "I allow et's all funny enuff fer you, but sic my poodle dorg ef I don't want yeouw Senate chaps to keep in yer own sphere, wi'out encroachin' over on ther House o' Representatives. Ye parseeve I'm inclined ter be fair an' squar', but I allus did b'lieve in every flea keepin' in his own pasture. Torkin' about fleas, hev any o' you chaps got 'em?"

The surrounding specters slowly shook their heads in the negative.

"Thort so," the poet grinned, approvingly. "Fleas aire the holy terror of my life. As ther younger Shakespeare used to remark when I war gone:

"White pillars, sheets and rugs,
Need not handled be with nippers,
Fer tho' they'll oft be bugs,
You've a warrentee 'gin skippers.

"Muchee likee! chirps the festive earthly semblance o' yours truthsomely; but he w'u'd rather you'd keep yer distance, if et's all the same to you."

But the ghostly circle stepped one pace nearer, and gave vent to an unearthly laugh. Shakespeare fairly wilted beneath the sepulchral chorus, and his scrawny burro seemed similarly affected.

"Humph! dog my Maltese cat!" the bullwhacker muttered, when he found power of utterance. "A feller'd think you've got the hypopreposterous ter hear ye sigh. Reckon ye ain't easy, hey? despite ther fac' thet ye've escaped from yer coffins. Thar was Bill Bustover up at Salt Creek, fer instance—Bill he war a tough pard, tho' he natterly had a good heart, which one day got out o' kilter, an' Ben Boxer sed as how Bill died o' ther James Jams. Anyhow, about a week arter Bill hed been planted, his shadder cum back an' handed me a string o' verses for publication in the *Clean Shave Bazoo* o' which I were then editor an' proprietor. They ran thusly:

Thermometers an' compasses—
Barometers ner meters
Can ne'er depict ther scorchin' rays,
O' Hades' infernal heaters.
They fricassee ye spirits bright;
Pig-tails they cook, an' 'coons,
While sinners bad, in generale,
They're cravin' without boons.
This lower world is desolate;
Ther snow storms much amazes;
Jest try a change ef ye don't b'lieve
That Hades aire hot as blazes.

An' I durst allow thet's sum ther figger o' ther thermometer up your way."

No answer came from the ghosts; the mute beckon of their outstretched fingers was all the reply the poet got for his little speech. And he liked it not.

"Oh! ye needn't speak if ye don't want ter," he said sullenly. "Ef ye think ye kin make me, ther great poet o' ther Pacif, believe thet you're gennywine bonny-fried ghosts, yer off yer kerbase—clean off. No sheep's fleece can ye elucidate my understanding with, nary a time;

no patent eye-closer kin ye apply sufficient ter close up my pair o' Peruvian peepers—not fer many colored-coated Josephus. Plain as uster be ther proboscis upon my physique, ar' ther fact thet thar's no more ghost about you than there is erbout ther business-end of a mule, an' so ye might as well cum down to bizness, acknowledge ther corn, an' hev a confab. Ef ye don't want tork, why jest say so. I nevyer war much of a talker, in my best days, an' I recollect thet I'm gettin' slow, ther more my age advances. Ef so be't Deadwood Dick is ther prime instigator of yer gang, then hyar's one philosophic poetical paragrapher what wants ter j'ine."

"Deadwood Dick belongs not to the Spirit Band of Silver Brow," a deep voice replied. "The famous bandit has paid his earthly score and is at rest."

"Bully fer Dickey! I warn't quite satisfied on thet p'int, an' thort I would investigate. 'Spect et's all right, only I had a premonition that Dickey war yet on his pegs. No 'ffense, eh? Reckon I'll journey back ter Grim Gulch."

"An' I reckon ye won't!" the ghostly speaker declared, with emphasis. "You are our prisoner, until we see fit to otherwise dispose of you!"

Then at a motion from him, the other "ghosts" closed in, and Shakespeare was a prisoner ere he was scarcely aware of it.

It needed no further experience to determine that his captors were too strong-handed to be other than human; no vapor or etherealism was there in the grip of the hands that held him while he was being bound.

This operation successfully performed, the bullwhacker's eyes were blindfolded; and then his feet were liberated and he was marched off, a man having hold of either arm.

"Yas, ye'r' mighty smart—too cute fer anything," he grumbled, as he was trotted along rather briskly. "Thar ain't nary a shadder o' respect about ye fer ther fine arts or ye'd respect a courter of the Muses. Jist let me return to Grim Gulch, an' I'll sw'ar et sha'n't cost ye a nickel when ye want an epertaff composed fer yer tombstone. I git thar, on epertaffs, I do, an' I tell ye ther biggest kinds o' complerments aire paid me, ter boot. Thar's heaps o' ther statesmen I've epertaffed ahead o' time, so as ter be ready when they shuffled off. Ther beauchifullest stanzer I ever perpetrated, however, I got off on Big-Mouthed Sam, over in Piute:

"Big mouth-ed Sam
Is dead an' departed,
He died of a bile in his gall;
When he hit from the shoulder
I tell ye it smarted,
But he's cloaked his sins under a shawl.

"That aire ar' werry good, stranger, but et ain't no sarcumstance:—

"Heer lies Mrs. McGraw,
A woman of jaw,
Who slipped off the coil quite disgusted;
She scalped with a saw,
Her new son-in-law,
An' his proboscis quietly bu'sted,

"Or techin' another subject:—

"Hyar sleeps Jim Plum
Ther biggest bum,
Thet evyer pulled a trigger;
He got his last meal
Of Trojan steel.
Fer callin' Ching Chang a 'nigger.'

"Yas, gents, ef ye'll remounteth me upon mine 'umble jack-mule, and headeth mine course toward Grim Gulch, ye can freely call upon me at any time fer leetle effusions like the above or to suit any circumstances."

"Can't help what you want; the best thing for you to do is march along and shut up!" was the surly response of the commanding ghost. "When we want any epitaphs very likely we can provide some to suit."

Shakespeare was about to venture some reply, but was checked from so doing by a rap upon the head that dropped him to the ground, senseless.

The scene had changed, when he awoke to consciousness, and found the bandage removed from his eyes. He was lying upon the floor in an apartment of what appeared to be a one-roomed log cabin. At all events the walls on either side and the ceiling overhead were composed of partly-hewn logs, with clay stuffed between the chinks.

But there were several doors from which it appeared that there must be other apartments.

The room in which the bullwhacker found himself was wholly unfurnished, and untenanted save by himself.

Where he was, or what he had been put here for, he could not tell, but he felt next to positive that he was a prisoner, despite the fact that his bonds had been removed and he had the freedom of his limbs.

Examination proved that each door was locked on the opposite side, and being made of heavy oaken slab, there appeared to be slim chances of escape, as far as the doors were concerned.

There was but one window of any sort, and this was a small grated opening up near the ceiling, barely large enough for the passage of a cat.

Shakespeare surveyed his situation as well as he was able by the rays that struggled in through this window-grating, then felt himself over, to make sure no bones were broken, after which he soliloquized:—

"Waal, I'm caged—thet's sure's:—

"The early bird thet caught the worm
An' started out to hunt,
An' met a ram frum Alabam',
An' got an awful bunt.

"They've shet me up hyar like sum prisoner in a Bastile, an' ef I ain't gone off in ther karbase o' my reckonin' entirely, et'll be a considerable period ere I am able to perigrinate once more in my native sphere, and resume aditorial enterprise. I half suspect, however, that should I exert myself the powers of these walls are not adequate to contain my noble self."

Perhaps he could make his escape!

He decided not to despair until he could test the matter, and to that end drew a keen-bladed knife from his bootleg, and set to work at cutting a hole through one of the doors, so that he

could reach his hand through and dislodge the bar upon the other side.

It was a slow and tedious job, which required more than one hour of steady labor, the effect of which brought beads of perspiration to his brow.

He finally accomplished his object, and had the door unfastened. It opened into another room which was a duplicate of the one that had been assigned him as a prison, and this in turn had a door which opened into some other room.

This door, however, was not locked, and he was enabled to pursue his investigation without hindrance.

One room after another he entered, and found them nearly all alike, until fifteen had been visited, and yet the end was not!

What strange mountain den was he rambling through, of such gigantic dimensions?

The sixteenth room brought a change. It was a mammoth affair, the heavy log ceiling being supported on upright timbers or pillars of the same material. Several bunks of skins contained white-robed figures, such as had constituted the poet's captors. They were apparently asleep.

Shakespeare paused in the entrance, undecided whether to enter or not, as there was danger of his being discovered.

Seeing no stir, however, he ventured softly into the room and across it to the further side and into a passageway beyond.

Now came a predicament.

His ears were greeted with the blare of a trumpet, and he heard many footsteps marching along toward him through the densely dark and narrow hallway he had entered.

Glancing back into the apartment he had just left, he saw that the sleeping ghosts had risen to their feet and were advancing toward the center.

To advance into the passage seemed to court actual discovery, while to retreat into the room was to confront the same result.

So dark was the passage it was barely possible that, by standing closely against the wall, the new-comers might pass by without discovering him—only barely possible, yet was the only chance, and he resolved to try it.

On came the tramp of feet, as if in military order; nearer they approached, until Shakespeare could see their shadow, even in the dense gloom, and felt sure he must be discovered.

He drew his knife and waited for the worst.

On came the band, and he perceived that they were clad exactly in the style they had been at the time of his capture, only that they wore black gowns instead of white ones, now.

The first couple passed him without discovering him, and he felt a great relief as he was satisfied the rest would do the same.

About twelve couple passed him, and he was about to breathe freer, when he heard still another lot coming, a little in the rear of the others.

He was now becoming so accustomed to the darkness, that he could better distinguish them as they approached, and saw that they were two of the Black Gowns, leading a third man between them, who wore no gown. A handkerchief was

thrown over his face, however, so as to render it impossible for the poet to see it.

No fool was Shakespeare. Life among the mines had taught him a few things, if he was big and blatant, and one of those things was to be crafty.

And feeling sure that the man in charge of the two Black Gowns was none other than Deadwood Dick, alive and well, despite all evidence to the contrary, he resolved to make a bold effort to rescue the young Mayor of Grim Gulch or know the reason why.

CHAPTER XI.

A POET'S GRIT AND STAGE-DRIVER'S HONOR.

Two men were of no great account in the eyes of the bullwhacker; he had often laid out many more than that in a single struggle, and lived to tell of it.

To successfully attack these Black Gowns, however, meant a big job in point of discretion and caution—one blow must do the work, without giving them an opportunity to alarm their friends in advance, or all would be lost.

Nearer and nearer approached the couple, who conducted between them the man whom the bullwhacker was next to certain was Deadwood Dick—closer, until they came opposite him; then, with the agility of a panther, he made the spring which was to tell the tale.

There was a short, almost noiseless struggle, then two men lay dead upon the floor of the passage, and two stood up, facing each other.

They were Deadwood Dick—he who had been known in Grim Gulch as Sugar-Coated Sam—and Shakespeare; and even in the darkness the men recognized each other.

"You!" Dick gasped, a little surprised that the man who had, in a previous life experience, been his enemy, should now come forth to his rescue.

"Yes, I!" Shakespeare declared in an undertone. "Thar ain't no time fer contemplative retrospection, you bet yer boots! Ef we want ter get out o' hyar wi' our cravat models untouched, we've got ter slope mighty suddintly. D'ye know whar ther exit air?"

"Yes, follow this passage back, and it will bring you to daylight. Go ahead, and I will follow."

The bullwhacker made haste to obey, and Dick, of Deadwood fame, was not slow in following his example.

Down the passage with rapid but careful steps, it was not long ere they debouched through a doorway into a mountain glade, fringed with trees and overshadowed by towering walls of rock.

The only apparent exit from this glade was through a split between two mountain peaks, which constituted a mountain ravine, and the two had barely succeeded in reaching the mouth of this when they heard loud yells in their rear, and saw the Black Gowns pouring from the cabin.

"It's leg bail for security now!" Dick said, "and I opine the man who can make the fewest laps to the mile is the lucky fellow. Come on!" and he took the lead on a brisk run up the gulch.

Shakespeare followed suit, while after them came the Black Gowns, howling like a pack of coyotes.

It was no use, however, for them to give chase, and they finally abandoned it, for Dick and the poet had a good quarter-mile the start, and appeared quite able to make it more, both being fleet of foot and inspired with the determination to escape or drop in the attempt.

Seeing that they were no longer pursued, they slackened their speed somewhat, and began to cast about them for indications of their whereabouts.

The best way of finding out seemed to be to ascend one of the peaks and take observations therefrom.

This they accordingly did, and found, as near as they could judge, that they were some seven or eight miles north of Grim Gulch.

The day was pretty well gone, and feeling considerably exhausted, Dick questioned Shakespeare concerning the state of affairs at Grim Gulch, and then said:

"It is so late, and things being easy in the town, I guess we had better remain here until to-morrow, and then I will disguise myself, and we will return to the camp. I guess I can fix myself up so I won't be known—for a few days at least. But tell me what appears most strange to me—why do I find a rescuer in you? I fancy we were not exactly friends up in Tombstone a short while ago."

"No, we were not, 'ca'se I war inclined ter be bullysme, but now I've got over that. Since I've lost my nasal appendage, friend Richard, my speeret has underwent a change, and I am able to discover that all thet shines ain't auriferous an' thet thar's gud resolutions in ary down-trodden human, ef ye only take pains ter cultivate it. I foresee'd thet ye war a purty level sort o' senator, despite all efforts to crush you, and so I reckoned et would be a purty gud idea to give you a lift in an hour of need."

"And you have done so, and have my heartiest gratitude and thanks," Dick said, warmly. "The escape from those pretended ghosts is most providential to me. Some time ago, a dying adventuress voluntarily gave me a token which exposed the secret burial-place of a vast amount of mined gold, which she said was rightly hers. I came to Grim Gulch as Sugar-Coated Sam, with a party of other prospectors, to hunt for the buried treasure, but found nothing where my clew directed. It now seems that the chief of the band you recently rescued me from, was the husband of the woman, or, at least, that is the claim preferred, and that the woman had stolen and secreted all his gold, and fled. If this story be reliable or not, I of course do not know. At any rate, by some means unknown to me, the chief of this band of miners and robbers combined, got wind of the fact that I had come into possession of the clew to the burial-place of the stolen treasure, and he sent his aids to capture me. He, in person, it was, who robbed my safe, after knocking me over, and his men it was who came to the jail, murdered the guards and freed me, after which one of the dead men was clad in my own garments, and I was borne away to this mountain retreat from which you rescued

me. Here in the short interval since my capture, I have been subjected to many indignities, and, at the time of my release, thanks to you for it, they were going to blister my feet, in hopes of extorting from me the secret of the buried treasure, which I should think twice about surrendering, did I possess it."

Shakespeare was silent a few moments, then he said, after first having related the recent exploits of the pseudo-ghosts, in Grim Gulch:

"Thar's another thing I allow ye don't know, an' et's one thing w'at brought me to your rescue."

"Ah! indeed! What is it?"

"Waal, et ain't werry pleasant news at the best, an' I suppose et'll be a surprise to ye, but heer she am. Ther partner of yer joys and sorrows, Calamity Jane, lies sick in Grim Gulch, at the cabin o' Bessie Burt. She war playin' strong keerds fer ye, during the campaign, an' callin' herself Bumblebee Bob; but she got more lead than she could stand up under, and so had to crawl away to shelter. I figured the thing out, and allowed thet ef Commydore Burt war to get hold of et, thar might be a rumpus, so I come to let you know."

"Bad enough," Deadwood Dick muttered, his brow darkening. "I was afraid the brave but reckless heart would not remain behind, as she promised me. As you say, if the Mormon devil, Burt, were to find out her presence and helpless condition, he would do the utmost in his power to kill her. We must hasten back to the town at once."

Shakespeare was ready. He seemed fully as eager as Dick for the welfare of the two women.

As they had no horses, nothing was left for them but to make their journey on foot, without any certainty how many miles they would have to cover nor perils they might encounter.

Shaping their course in the presumed direction of Grim Gulch, they set out through the gathering twilight.

The day preceding the night which was to witness the attack upon the Burt shanty by the commodore and his followers, was a far from bright day at the shanty.

The exertion of the previous night, which had brought such exhaustion to Calamity, had also brought on brain fever, and all through the day she was wildly delirious.

At times she would call for Deadwood Dick, in piteous tones; then again she would grow furious over some nameless wrong of an equally nameless person. A lull would then follow, for a few minutes, when to all appearances the poor girl would enjoy a refreshing nap.

It is doubtful, however, if she really felt any better, as she would soon begin her ravings again.

Bessie was nearly distracted.

She tried everything she knew to relieve the sufferer, and when that failed she sat down in a corner and indulged in a good, prolonged cry.

She could not refrain from it—she keenly felt what was the pain of being alone and friendless, and especially in such an hour of sickness and distress.

The sick girl must have heard her sobs, or else

subtle instinct told her who was crying, for she sat up abruptly on her bed.

Her eyes were wild and strange in their glaring expression, and her features were rigidly drawn, as if she were in an angry passion.

"What are you crying about?" she asked, in a cold, repellent way. "Who told you to snivel?"

Bessie looked up with a start, utterly shocked and horrified at the harsh speech; but in a moment she comprehended that it was but another freak of the poor girl's wandering reason.

"Speak!" Calamity cried, her voice unusually strong. "What are you crying about?"

"I was only weeping because you are feeling so badly," Bessie replied, drying her tears, but feeling a strange, indescribable sensation of alarm. "I am so sorry I cannot do something to help you."

"Pooh! You're a silly fool! I never was better in my life. I understand your case. You see there's every indication of my getting well, and you're sniveling lest you don't get Dick. Oh! I understand—I understand! I know how it is. Dick used to come here, I've heard, and was playing it up soft on you. But, ha! ha! he's planted—thank goodness for that! Besides, he wouldn't stoop to caress one of your little fingers."

Bessie listened, with something akin to horror, unable to make any protesting reply. But there was no particular need of it. Calamity soon subsided into quiet again; her terrible gaze however, never for an instant left the face of her supposed rival. It was a gaze of suspicious resolve, and Bessie felt fearful lest she should attack her in one of her spells of insanity.

At last she closed her eyes, and kept them closed so long, that Bessie took it for granted she was asleep, and rose to steal from the room.

But, as quick as a flash Calamity, sat up in bed, her eyes fairly blazing with anger, and in her hand she held a cocked revolver!

Where she could have got it Bessie had no idea, but she had it all the same, and Bessie was the target at which it was aimed.

"Stop! Desert me in this hour of trouble, and I'll make a corpse of you. I mean business, so sit down!" she said with promptness and command.

And nothing was left for Bessie but to obey.

She sat down again, and appeared to busy herself at some sewing, but she was secretly expecting the erratic woman would make an attempt to do her some injury.

Such was not the case, however.

In about an hour, Calamity fell asleep. She slept soundly until the shadows of night began to gather over the town, and in the mean time Bessie locked her shanty, and ran over to the nearest store for some groceries.

She could but notice the many strange glances of those who had previously been friendly toward her, as well as of strangers, and this too had sent a chill of terror through her frame.

"I wish I were far from this place," she murmured, after she had made a few purchases and was hurrying homeward. Something seems to tell me that trouble is brewing. Indeed, I have hourly been expecting it since the commodore

discovered Calamity in my house, if indeed he had time to discover her before he was dragged out."

Just before she reached home she met Joe Langdon, the man who drove the stage. He was a sober, well-minded man of four-and-twenty, fairly good-looking, and making money, but not generally popular because he neither drank, swore nor gambled, and would not work on Sunday.

He had called on Bessie once or twice to leave some washing, and during such occasions their acquaintance had so progressed that Bessie became quite fond of him, while it was easy to see that she was one after his special liking.

He stopped her now by a gesture of his hand, the old quiet smile not upon his face, but in its place an expression of anxiety and doubt.

"Miss Burt," he said, soberly, "reports reach me that you are harboring the wife of the once famous outlaw, Deadwood Dick. Tell me, is this true?"

"Quite true, Mr. Langdon. Calamity Jane, as she is called, came to me wounded almost unto death, and as I am a Christian woman, I took her in, and have cared for her up to the present time."

"Humanity in this case may work you exceeding mischief. That blustering party who calls himself Commodore Burt has discovered that you are secreting the woman, and he has enlisted the majority of the citizens against you. To-night an attack will be made upon your cabin, and an attempt made to lynch you both."

Bessie gasped.

"Surely they would not do this, sir?"

"I fear they will, if they get you. The name of Deadwood Dick, or any person who has ever been associated with him, don't get much mercy at the hands of the citizens of these rough mining-towns, and unless I guess amiss, they would show you no mercy. Your only safety is to take your few effects and quietly leave the town."

"What! and leave poor, helpless Calamity to the fury of the mob?"

"What better can you do?"

"I can die defending her, Joe Langdon, and that's every bit what I will do before I'll desert her. Indeed, I'd face a whole army if need be, before I'd be guilty of such a thing!"

"Brave girl! I honor your decision, and though it has never been my will to war against mankind, I'll stand by you now. Hurry back to your home, and I will join you soon, with ammunition and weapons, with which to defend ourselves!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE END.

BESSIE obeyed the stage-driver's orders, for she had faith in him and his judgment, because he had to her ever seemed honest and reliable.

According to promise, he soon followed her, bringing a trio of good rifles, several revolvers and a stock of ammunition.

It was by this time quite dusky outside, and an attack might be expected at any minute.

Calamity was sleeping calmly, and at Bessie's request, Langdon took a glance in at her.

"Ah! very fair—too pretty, in fact, for the position in life she occupies," was his comment, as he left the room. "I've heard of her as Calamity Jane, and that a wilder, more unmanageable piece does not exist in the hills."

"I do not know much about her," Bessie replied, "more than she has seemed very nice, and has endeared herself to me, in the short time she has been under my care."

"Undoubtedly; she is probably handy at the endearing business. Nevertheless, you are to be commended for having taken her in, under the circumstances."

An hour passed and no hostile demonstration was begun on the outside of the shanty, the doors and windows of which Bessie had taken the precaution to carefully fasten. A little later, however, there came a knock at the door, and Bessie thought she recognized it.

"Get in the next room quietly," she whispered, "and wait for my call. I think it is the commodore, come to talk the matter over."

Joe obeyed, and then Bessie went and opened the door.

It was the commodore, indeed, and he entered promptly, when he saw the door opened for him.

"Ha! ha! I see you are still here."

"Oh! yes, I am nearly always here," Bessie replied, composedly. "You were also here once before, I believe, but took leave so suddenly that you scarcely had time to say your adieus. I wonder you are back so soon."

"Oh! yes. I am aware that I have returned too soon for you," he replied; "but this time I mean business."

"Indeed!"

"You shall see, my independent miss. I have things all my own now."

"I fail to see in what respect, sir."

"Do you? Well, I have been fortunate enough to discover the important fact that you are secretly conniving against the law by harboring the wife and partner in crime of the late Deadwood Dick. This fact is all the evidence I can ask against you, for it will hang you without parley, if you don't accede to my terms."

"Hang it shall be, then," Bessie replied, coolly. "I would greet such a punishment, if such it can be called, with the greatest alacrity, in preference to accepting or deliberating on any plans you might make. I am perfectly aware of your proposed attack upon my cabin, backed by a collection of ruffians whom cowardice forced you to hire to do your bidding. All I have to say is, come on! I am prepared, and I dare and defy you! Joe?"

In response to the call Langdon stepped quickly from the adjoining room.

"Throw him out, Mr. Langdon," Bessie ordered. "His presence is obnoxious to me."

"Yes, throw him out, you overgrown loafer, if you can!" the commobore cried, drawing a revolver.

But he had no opportunity even to cock it, for the wiry stage-driver sprung upon him at a single bound, wrenched the weapon from his grasp, and, by a dextrous movement, pitched him head-foremost out of doors. Then, with a

pair of sixes in his grasp, he stood fearlessly in the doorway and waited for a return assault.

But the valiant commodore evidently did not feel disposed to depend upon his own ability to win him laurels, and rising with a smothered malediction, he limped off.

"Now then, look out for trouble," Langdon said, as he closed and re-barred the door. "He won't tarry long in communicating his grievances to his backers, and we may safely look for the attack at any minute."

And he was not "off" in his reckoning.

In less than half an hour a hum of voices became audible out on the night, which, the nearer it approached, increased to a pandemonium of yells and screeches, mingled with terrible profanity and the heavy, confused tramp of feet.

In the course of five minutes more the riotous crowd came into sight, many of them armed with torches, while others were equipped with weapons and missiles of every kind.

They were all in all a hard-looking gang, numbering forty or fifty.

If Burt was among them he was in the rear, where there was the least possibility of the bullets reaching him.

Inside the cabin, Bessie and Langdon stood near two loop-holes which the Jehu had thoughtfully provided, and peered out at the rough gang, with anxiety and doubt written upon their faces.

"It looks like we've got a bigger dose than we can swallow," Langdon remarked. "But there's only one thing to do—be brave, and fight to the last. If we succeed in beating them back, all right; if they once get their hands on us, up we go."

Bessie clinched her rifle tightly, but did not reply.

By this time the mob had drawn up in formidable force before the shanty, and stood for a moment in grim silence.

Then an uncouth, ruffianly-looking pilgrim who had evidently been appointed to command, stepped forward and took off his hat, threw it under between his legs and caught it again on his head, after which he said:

"Gentlemen an' feller-citizens! This hyar is an occasion as shed fill every patriotic speerit with genuine enthusiasm, fer we're on ther eve o' one o' ther greatest triumphs thet hes ever struck ther country wild. Yonder in thet shebang aire three human mortals who stand in utter contempt and defiance of the laws of mankind, one of whom is the wife of the recently killed outlaw, of whom every mother's son of you must have heard—Deadwood Dick. As a fair, squar' an' upright set of galoots, we hev put our heads tergether in communion, and decided that et becomes our station, as active honorary citizens who takes our bitters straight three times a day, or more, ter boost these law-defying ones to an altertude above ther sins an' sorrers o' this world. Tharfore, on callin' upon 'em ter deliver up, ef they refuse we aire ter sail in an' tear ther shebang down over their heads. Ain't thet ther ticket?"

"Percisely ther plum!" responded one of the men, and the rest assented by sundry nods and ejaculations.

"Then, to ye all whomsoever an' whatsoever may be confined within yon shanty, do I, Grasshopper Jake, issue a pre-emptory command ter vacate them premises instanter an' ter oncet, an' surrender, or et'll be ther wuss fer ye, an' ye'll hev ter abide wi' ther consequences thet foller! Wull ye open up an' surrender, or no?"

"No!" Joe yelled, through one of the loopholes. "Beware, lest you tackle a hornets' nest."

"Hooray! Heer that, will ye! At 'em, boys!" the leader shouted. "Capture 'em, an' string 'em up, as ye would a haunch o' venison to a—"

They were the last words of the ruffian. A bullet from Joe Langdon's rifle cut off his words and, with a gurgling moan, he fell forward, dead.

As they saw him fall, the mob uttered a vengeful shout, and sprung toward the shanty, bent upon its destruction.

It was but a frail, hastily-built affair, and it was evident that the infuriated roughs must make short work of it.

Langdon seemed better aware of the fact than Bessie, and knew that it would be next to a miracle if they succeeded in saving themselves from slaughter.

This fired him with awful resolve, and with his sixteen-shot repeater he fired rapidly and with telling effect.

Bessie was also enough of a border girl to well know the use of a rifle, and she fired her repeater nearly as rapidly as her companion.

The mob were hammering and pounding away on the outside, like a pack of demons, doing far more swearing and yelling than effective work.

In the midst of the terrible confusion Calamity appeared at Bessie's side, clad in the same attire she had worn when she had played up Bumblebee Bob.

"What is the matter?" she demanded, her wild eyes gleaming luridly.

"It means that the townspeople are after you, and we are trying to save you from their clutches," Bessie replied.

Calamity stood an instant as if not quite comprehending the drift of the words; then with a wild laugh she turned and dashed back into her own room and slammed the door shut.

Bang! bang! bang!

Hammer! tear! yell!

These seemed to be the ruling sounds that made the night hideous.

The ruffians were getting several boards loose; soon they would have made a hole large enough to admit them to the inside of the cabin.

It seemed but a moment now, from the life to the death of the plucky defenders.

"Give it to 'em!" Langdon gritted, his face smoked with powder. "If we give up now we're lost."

"We are, anyhow, I am afraid," Bessie answered, her courage wavering.

"Take hope, till the last! Ah! hark!"

The mob had temporarily ceased their attack upon the building, and the hoof-strokes of approaching horses were heard above the subdued yells of the rioters.

"Thank God! help of some kind is coming," Langdon cried.

And so it appeared, for the attack on the shanty ceased altogether, while the mob opened fire upon the approaching party, whoever they might be, and their salute was promptly and steadily returned.

By aid of a step-ladder, Joe climbed up to the roof of canvas, and cutting a slit, thrust his head through to see what was the aspect of things.

What he saw was a band of horsemen bearing down upon the mob, firing as they came—not plainly attired riders, by any means, but the same white-robed things that had once before paid the town a visit.

They appeared rather lively for ghosts, just now, and the mob seemed to think so too, for there was evident terror among them; they were the defensive rather than the attacking party now.

Joe, as soon as he had reconnoitered, descended and apprised Bessie of the situation, and she clasped her hands in joy.

"This is good news. Whoever these pretended ghosts may be, I do not believe we have any more to fear from them than from this mob of ruffians. What is best to do?"

"Escape while the two parties are engaged in battle. Is there not a rear way?"

"Yes; but can we get Calamity to accompany us? You know how she is in her state of delirium."

"We can try. I will see what effect I can have on her."

He crossed the room and opened the door which communicated with Calamity's apartment.

A glance showed him that it was vacant. She was gone, and a raised window told how she had escaped.

Langdon immediately reported to Bessie this fact, and she was greatly surprised.

"Poor girl," she said. "I fear she will fall into greater peril, and then she is so sick and weak too! Come, let us get away if possible. The battle outside is furious now, and we shall perhaps be able to escape unnoticed."

They hurried to the rear entrance, not forgetting to take along their weapons.

Opening the door they went forth into the almost Stygian darkness of the night, but not half a dozen steps had they taken when they were pounced upon by several white-robed figures, made prisoners in a jiffy—then mounted upon horses, with a guard, and borne rapidly away.

The "ghosts" made short work of cleaning out the mob, for seeing that defeat was inevitable, the roughs soon broke into confusion and fled in all directions. Many were successful in beating a retreat, but not all, and those who were not, fell beneath the fire of the white-robed assailants.

One of those who made an attempt to escape was the Danite, Commodore Burt, but before he ran ten yards he got a bullet in his leg which caused him intense pain and disabled him so that he could scarcely walk. Then he became

aware that he was being followed, and that, too, by one of the white-robed figures.

His terror at this was great, and was heightened by the fact that he was weaponless, having loaned them to one of the roughs at the beginning of the attack on the shanty.

Cursing and groaning at every step, he hobbled along as fast as he could; but the footsteps of the pursuer sounded close in his rear, and he came to a halt.

The white figure also came to a halt, and threw off his ghostly gown, revealing the same gray-bearded man who had once before attacked the commodore and whom Bessie had called "father."

"Ha! you?" the Danite gasped.

"Yes, I," the other replied, sternly. "I see you recognize me now, as your brother, whom you consigned to a dog's death, at the hands of your accursed Danite allies. But I escaped them, and after I found the persecution you were offering my child, I took your trail, swearing to hunt you down to the death you deserve. Your time has come; you shall die now, before any more crime stains your vile soul. Here is a revolver—take it and blow your brains out, and save me the trouble."

The Danite picked up the weapon, and examined it; then, instead of aiming it at himself, suddenly leveled it at his brother.

But he did not fire. He fell to the ground, shot through the heart by the one whom he would have assassinated.

Thus ended this life of crime—the checkered existence of one of the worst wretches that ever helped to add to the dark reputation of Mormon Utah.

Deadwood Dick and Shakespeare found that they were getting more than they bargained for, in attempting to find their way back to Grim Gulch, for they lost their bearing, on a dozen different occasions, and were obliged to retrace their footsteps, all of which was most vexations.

Not only that night was absorbed in this wandering about, but also the ensuing day, and it was considerably after nightfall the next night ere they reached any familiar landmarks that told them where they were.

"I reckon we're not far from Grim Gulch, now," Dick said, as they strode down a gloomy ravine. "If I am not greatly mistaken, this is a tributary of the main gulch."

"By ther cackle of old Job's turkey, I hope we're purty nigh thar, fer I'm sufferin' fer refreshments like some camel ten weeks out in ther desert o' Sarah Jane," was the poet's gloomy answer.

"I've noticed that you've been less poetical than usual," Dick observed with a smile. "But cheer up; it cannot be far now to a place where strychnine-juice is for sale. Ha! hold on!"

They came to a halt, Dick a few paces in advance and standing in an attitude on the defensive.

A few rods ahead gleamed a faint light through a thin motte of trees, which looked as if there might be an encampment there of some sort.

"We'd better investigate the origin of that,"

Dick said, pointing toward it, "before we stumble into a hornets' nest. You stay here, and I'll go ahead and explore."

He did so, and found a little camp-fire burning in the motte, in the light of which were four persons, who had evidently but recently arrived.

Two of the persons were duplicates of the white-robed gang who had been Dick's captors from the Grim Gulch jail; the other two were Joe Langdon and Bessie Burt.

Deadwood Dick grew pale when he saw them, for he knew there had been trouble at Bessie's home, and if Calamity was there sick, what may not have been her fate?

At first he was tempted to sail in and attack the two "ghosts" single-handed, but, having only one weapon, and that a knife, he concluded it would be the safest to enlist the poet in the rescue.

Therefore, he hastily notified that worthy, and together they made a detour and approached the camp from the opposite side, to which their backs were turned.

To approach close behind them and seize them was short but careful work, and their ghostships found themselves bound and helpless, almost before they were aware of it.

Langdon and Bessie were then released, and explanations were exchanged when Dick learned of Calamity's condition and her strange flight.

"I fear I will never see her again—at any rate, not like the same girl she once was. God watch over and protect her."

The outlaws were unmasked of their white gowns, and proved to be two of the pilgrims who had once, in the early days of Deadwood, belonged to one of Dick's bands of road-agents.

On this account, Dick decided not to do them any further harm than to leave them where they were bound, to await the arrival of their companions.

Feeling that it was no longer safe for any of the party in that region, Dick proposed that they cross the range to the favorite mining districts, thirty or forty miles distant, to which all assented, and they set forth.

The following day they came across the body of Mr. Burt or Silver Brow. In the darkness he had evidently fallen from a cliff above the trail, to which he had been making his way. He was stone dead; and by his side were several bags of gold, both in nuggets and shining dust, which he was, for some reason, bearing along with him.

The gold was turned over to Bessie, who recognized the dead man as her father; and he was given as good a burial as circumstances would permit.

The party safely reached the new camp, and here Bessie, in due time, became Mrs. Joe Langdon, while Deadwood Dick and his now fast friend, Shakespeare, took their leave on a tour of search for lost Calamity Jane.

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